

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, March 29, 2004
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(Continued on the inside of the back cover.)

Editor's Note: The President was in Phoenix, AZ, on March 26, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

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Week Ending Friday, March 26, 2004

Proclamation 7763—National Poison Prevention Week, 2004

March 19, 2004

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Each year, approximately 1 million calls to poison control centers are made because children may have ingested harmful substances. The National Poison Prevention Week Council organizes activities annually to raise awareness of the danger of unintentional poisoning and to educate adults about how to avoid and handle these emergencies.

Since the first National Poison Prevention Week in 1962, our Nation has taken important steps to protect children from consuming inappropriate medicines or household chemicals by heightening awareness, supporting poison control centers, and improving packaging. In December, I signed the Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act Amendments of 2003 to provide assistance for poison prevention programs and to stabilize the funding of regional poison control centers. This measure supports those who are working to reduce poisonings in America and to improve the safety and health of all Americans.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission requires child-resistant packaging for certain toxic medicines and chemicals. Because packaging is never completely child-proof, adults should also lock medicines and chemicals out of the reach of children.

To encourage Americans to learn more about the dangers of accidental poisonings and to take appropriate preventive measures, the Congress, by joint resolution approved September 26, 1961, as amended (75 Stat. 681), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week of March each year as “National Poison Prevention Week.”

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 21 through March 27, 2004, as National Poison Prevention Week. I call upon all Americans to observe this week by participating in appropriate activities and by learning how to prevent poisonings among children.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11 a.m., March 22, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 23. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President’s Radio Address

March 20, 2004

Good morning. One year ago this week, ground forces of a strong coalition entered Iraq to liberate that country from the rule of a tyrant. For the Iraqi people, it was the beginning of their deliverance. For the world, it was the moment when years of demands and pledges turned to decisive action.

The liberation of Iraq was good for the Iraqi people. It was good for America and good for the world. The fall of the Iraqi dictator has removed a source of violence, aggression, and instability from the Middle East. The worst regime in the region was given way to what will soon be among the best. The demands of the United Nations were enforced, not ignored with impunity. Years of illicit weapons development by the dictator have come to an end. The Iraqi people are now receiving aid instead of suffering under sanctions. And men and women across

the Middle East, looking to Iraq, are getting a glimpse of what life in a free country can be like.

Helping Iraq emerge as a free nation is a global responsibility, and the nations of the world are meeting their responsibilities. Troops from Britain and Poland and Japan are securing important areas of the country. Special Forces from El Salvador, Macedonia, and other nations are helping to find and defeat Ba'athist and terrorist killers. In all, more than 50 nations are helping the Iraqi people emerge from decades of tyranny and realize a democratic future.

There are still violent thugs and murderers in Iraq, and our coalition is dealing with them. Not long ago, we intercepted a planning document being sent to leaders of Al Qaida by a terrorist named Zarqawi. Along with the usual threats, he had a complaint: "Our enemy," said Zarqawi, "is growing stronger, and his intelligence data are increasing day by day. This is suffocation!" Zarqawi is getting the idea. The resolve of our coalition is firm. We will never turn over Iraq to terrorists who intend our own destruction. We will not fail the Iraqi people, who have placed their trust in us. Whatever it takes, we will fight and work to assure the success of freedom in Iraq.

The terrorists hate and target a free Iraq. They also hate and target every country that stands for democracy and tolerance and freedom in the world. The murders in Madrid have revealed, once again, the agenda and the nature of the terrorist enemy. They kill the innocent—they kill children and their mothers on a commuter train—without conscience or mercy. They cause suffering and grief and rejoice in it.

The war on terror is not a figure of speech. It is the inescapable calling of our generation. The terrorists are offended not merely by our policies. They are offended by our existence as free nations. No concession will appease their malice. No accommodation will satisfy their endless demands. No course of therapy will cure them of their hatred. There can be no separate peace with the terrorist enemy. Whatever it takes, we will seek and find and destroy the terrorists.

Earlier this week, I traveled to Fort Campbell in Kentucky, where I met with Green

Berets and Special Force soldiers and members of the 101st Airborne, the "Screaming Eagles." These men and women are defending their fellow citizens against ruthless enemies. They have liberated millions from oppression and added to the momentum of freedom across the world. Like all of their brothers and sisters in uniform, they are making America safer and more secure. Because of their service and sacrifice, I know that justice and freedom will prevail over terror and tyranny.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:36 a.m. on March 19 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 19 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in Orlando, Florida

March 20, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. It turns out the crowd is always a little bigger when Laura comes along. America loves her almost as much as I love her. I think she deserves 4 more years as the First Lady.

No, it's great to be back in the great State of Florida again. There's a big election coming up, and I thought I'd come down for a little spring training. It's always a good chance to be with Brother. [Laughter] He's a great Governor of this great State. Like me, he married well. [Laughter] I appreciate Colu being here as well. I used to say that Jeb was the coolest Governor in the country. That's until Arnold got elected.

Speaking about great leaders, I made a really good choice when I asked Dick Cheney to be my running mate. He and I are grateful for the many strong supporters we have here in Florida. We're going to be spending some quality time in this State. We're here to earn the vote, and we need your help. I know you're here because you do want to help. One of the most important things you can

do is encourage your neighbors to vote. We want a lot of people voting in this country. We want people from all walks of life doing their duty in this country, and that is to show up to the polls. And by the way, when you get them headed to the polls, you might suggest what's good for the country, and that is Bush-Cheney for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. And by the way, we set up a web site, so that you can get on to figure out how to volunteer. We need your help. That's what I'm here to ask for. It's not very complicated. It's georgewbush.com. That's an easy one for me to remember. *[Laughter]* With your help, we're going to make Florida a part of a great nationwide victory this November.

I'm so thankful for you all coming. I'm proud of the fact that two Members of the United States Congress is with us, Ric Keller and Tom Feeney.

Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings is here. I appreciate the Governor Jennings. Tom Gallagher is a statewide official. I'm proud my friend is here, Tom Gallagher. I want to thank all the statehouse members, all the local officials. The high sheriff is with us today. And thank all the law enforcement people that are with us today.

I want to thank my friend Roberto Candelario for leading the invocation. Roberto, thank you for coming. Thank you, Lisa Faulkner, for leading this great crowd in the National Anthem. I got here a little late. I didn't get to hear my friend Billy Ray Cyrus. Thank you, Billy Ray. The Katinas are with us as well. I'm proud they're here. I'm proud to have their support. My friend Lynn Swann is with us. He's welcome to come to Florida. We're a little nervous about inviting him down to Dallas. *[Laughter]* You know what I mean—a lot of Cowboy fans there. I appreciate so very much Footy for being here. Footy, thank you for emceeing this event.

The chairman of Bush-Cheney, Marc Racicot, the former Governor of Montana, is with us today. Marc, thank you for coming. My friend Al Hoffman, who has worked so hard in this State, is with us. Carole Jean Jordan, the chairman of the Florida Republican Party, is with us.

But most importantly, you're with us. I appreciate you coming. I know many of you are getting on buses and vans today for a voter registration drive. Thanks for doing that. The effort is going to help us. It will help our entire ticket. We have a strong slate of candidates. We're coming into an historic election, and we're going to win an historic victory this November.

The Presidential primary contest is over. I finally got an opponent.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He's following an interesting strategy. The other day, here in Florida, he claimed some important endorsements from overseas. He won't tell us the name of the foreign admirers. That's okay. Either way, I'm not too worried, because I'm going to keep my campaign right here in America.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. He's an experienced Senator, and he's built up quite a record. In fact, Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. *[Laughter]* Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly feels strongly about each of these issues—*[laughter]*—so strongly that one position is never just enough. He demonstrated the technique the other day. Someone asked Senator Kerry why he voted against the \$87-billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here is what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it." *[Laughter]* End of quote. *[Laughter]* That sure clears things up, doesn't it? *[Laughter]*

His answers aren't always clear, but the voters will have a very clear choice in this campaign. It is the choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

Now, I look forward to this debate. I look forward to this campaign. I'm looking forward to talking about what we've accomplished and what we're going to do. In the past 3 years, we've achieved great things, and most important, we have a positive vision for the years ahead: A positive vision for winning the war against terror; a positive vision for extending peace and freedom throughout our world; a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. We will leave no doubt where we stand. We will win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief. And now, our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation. We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings. We passed strong corporate reforms, and we made it clear, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We have captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will know there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. Once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. Today, no one can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents or future generations. It is the President's job to step up and make the tough decisions and to keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our great Nation.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and we will make it clear to the American people, we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Oh, I know there's some economic pessimists who refuse to accept good news about our economy. But I'm optimistic. I'll tell you why. I know what we've overcome. I've seen the spirit of the American people. I've seen Americans overcome economic challenges. Because of good policies and the hard work of the American people, our economy is strong, and it is growing stronger. Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added more than 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we created a lower 10-percent tax rate for working families, he voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend on, Senator Kerry voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When we gave small businesses a tax incentive to expand and to hire, he voted against it.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We're beginning to see a pattern here. [Laughter] Senator Kerry is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. However, when tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. [Laughter] Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people—

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. —including the biggest tax increase in American history. He also supported a 50-cent gallon tax on gasoline.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He wanted you to pay all that money at the pump and wouldn't even throw in a free car wash. [Laughter]

Now, Senator Kerry is proposing a lot of new Federal spending in this campaign. He's going to have pay for it somehow. There's a gap between Senator Kerry's spending promises and Senator Kerry's promise of a lower deficit. It's what I call a tax gap. Given Senator Kerry's record of supporting tax increases, it's pretty clear how he's going to fill the tax gap. He's going to tax all of you.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Fortunately, you're not going to give him that chance.

Higher taxes right now would undermine growth and destroy jobs just as our economy is getting stronger. It's bad policy. To help grow the American economy and create more jobs for American workers, I have a better idea: We should make all the tax cuts permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing to create jobs. We need to maintain spending discipline in our Nation's Capital. I have a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous and junk lawsuits and needless regulation. We have a

plan to control the cost of health care and give people better access through association health care plans and health savings accounts. And in order to control health care costs and to make sure docs are available, we need national medical liability reform now.

We have a strategy to make sure Florida goods are sold in markets all around the world. I proposed a great strategy to make sure our Nation has a sound energy plan, a plan that encourages conservation, a plan that modernizes the electricity system, a plan to make America less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

They talk a lot about job creation. My opponent talks about it, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, small-business President, and that's George W. Bush.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban no longer are in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and the dictator today sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress

looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Government.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. And as he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make, either take the word of a madman or to take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and a waiting world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. There's a reason. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. They don't understand us. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We're on the offensive. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own cities.

Other nations are helping us to build a free society in Iraq, because a free Iraq will make us all safer. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they're essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Senator Kerry said, and I quote, "The war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation."

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I disagree—I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. The terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were still drawing up more ambitious plans.

After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage. And I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We are strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for discrimination by the Federal Government against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find their independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench or judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. It's the culture of a country that's changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor, just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of the leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, challenges are difficult, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day.

One guy pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." And as we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of sacrifice and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our country unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. The world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. With your help, we're going to share our message of optimism and national strength with every voter in the State of Florida.

I'm looking forward to this campaign ahead. I'm going to give it my all. And I'm counting on you all to do the same. Talk to your friends. Talk to your neighbors. Get out the word. Ask people to join our cause to participate in democracy. With you at my side, there is no doubt in my mind we're headed to a victory on November the second.

Thank you for coming. God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:14 p.m. at the Orange County Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida, and his wife, Columba; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings of Florida; Tom Gallagher, chief financial officer, Florida Department of Financial Services; country music entertainer Billy Ray Cyrus; musical group The Katinas; pro football Hall of Fame receiver Lynn C. Swann; Al Hoffman, finance chairman, Republican National Committee; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

**Telephone Remarks to the South
Boston Saint Patrick's Day Breakfast**
March 21, 2004

The President. Senator, this would be your President calling.

State Senator Jack Hart. President Bush, President Bush is on the line. How about a nice round of applause for President Bush? Happy Saint Patrick's Day. What an honor.

The President. Yes, same to you, Jack. Thanks for letting me call in. I appreciate you taking my call.

Senator Hart. Any time, Mr. President, we'll take your call any time, for crying out loud.

The President. Well, I'm proud of that. Listen, I want to thank Father Casey. I presume he's got quite a few souls to save there in that crowd. [*Laughter*]

Senator Hart. There's quite a few Democratic souls to save in this hall, Mr. President.

The President. I know you've got one—you invited at least one Republican, and that's my friend the Governor.

Senator Hart. Yes, yes, he's here. Mitt Romney is here. We were going to ask you, Mr. President, do you need a running mate? [*Laughter*]

The President. Wait a minute.

Senator Hart. We like Dick Cheney and all, but we'd like for you to take the Governor to Washington, DC. [*Laughter*]

The President. Look, you're lucky to have the guy. Here's the way I like to put it about Massachusetts: I know there's a lot of talk about a Massachusetts politician who has his eye on the Presidency. But tell Mitt it's not open until 2008. [*Laughter*]

Senator Hart. Oh, you're talking about—you had me stumped for a second there. You're talking about Senator Kerry, of course.

The President. Oh, no, no.

Senator Hart. Oh, my goodness.

The President. You mean the—well, never mind. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor. I want to thank the speaker and the senate president. I miss my days as being the Governor. I loved dealing with our Lieutenant Governor and speaker and members of the statehouse and the State senate. And I wish

you all the very best. I know you're struggling with some big issues. But these are good, decent folks working for the people of Massachusetts to get some things done, and I appreciate, Jack, the spirit of this lunch.

Senator Hart. Well, thank you very much. We are certainly honored that you called, and we respect the job that you're doing. We pray for you every day, Mr. President. You're a good man, and we just wanted to wish you a very, very happy Saint Patrick's Day.

The President. Same to you, sir, and I wish everybody a happy Saint Patrick's Day as well. God bless, everybody. God bless our great Nation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. from the Residence at the White House to breakfast participants meeting in Boston, MA. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Robert E. Casey, pastor, Saint Brigid's Catholic Church, Boston, MA; Gov. Mitt Romney and Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey of Massachusetts; Thomas M. Finnerman, speaker, Massachusetts State house of representatives; and Robert E. Travaglini, president, Massachusetts State senate.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Transmitting a Consolidated Report
on the Deployment of United States
Combat-Equipped Armed Forces**
March 20, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In the interests of improving the efficiency of the reporting process and to increase the utility of reports to the Congress, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, I have decided to consolidate supplemental reports I provide to the Congress regarding the deployment of U.S. combat-equipped armed forces in a number of locations around the world. This consolidated report is part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about such deployments and covers operations in support of the global war on terrorism (including in Afghanistan), Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Haiti. Operations in Iraq are a critical part of the war on terror, and it is my intention to continue to provide, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, information regarding the deployment of U.S. forces in Iraq in the reports to the Congress

under Public Law 107-243 and Public Law 102-1, as amended.

The Global War on Terrorism

Since September 24, 2001, I have reported, consistent with Public Law 107-40 and the War Powers Resolution, on the combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qaida terrorists and their Taliban supporters, which began on October 7, 2001, and the deployment of various combat-equipped and combat-support forces to a number of locations in the Central, Pacific, and Southern Command areas of operation in support of those operations and of other operations in our global war on terrorism.

United States efforts in the campaign in Afghanistan continue to meet with success, but as I have stated in my previous reports, the U.S. war on terror will be lengthy. United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous coalition partners, continue to conduct the U.S. campaign to eliminate the primary source of support to the terrorists who viciously attacked our Nation on September 11, 2001. These operations have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qaida's training capability and virtually eliminating the Taliban's ability to brutalize the Afghan people and to harbor and support terrorists. Pockets of al-Qaida and Taliban forces, however, remain a threat to U.S. and Coalition forces and to the Afghan government and Afghan people. United States, Coalition, and Afghan forces are actively pursuing and engaging remnant Taliban and al-Qaida fighters.

The United States continues to detain several hundred al-Qaida and Taliban fighters who are believed to pose a continuing threat to the United States and its interests. The combat-equipped and combat-support forces deployed to Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay,

Cuba, in the U.S. Southern Command area of operations since January 2002, continue to conduct secure detention operations for the approximately 610 enemy combatants at Guantanamo Bay.

In furtherance of the U.S. worldwide efforts against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the United States, our friends and allies, and our forces abroad, the United States continues to work with

friends and allies in areas around the globe. For example, combat-equipped and combat-support forces deployed to Georgia to assist in training and equipping the Georgian government's forces will be completing their task in May 2004. United States combat-equipped and combat-support forces are also located in Djibouti. The U.S. forces headquarters element in Djibouti provides command and control support as necessary for military operations against al-Qaida and other international terrorists in the Horn of Africa region, including Yemen. These forces also assist in enhancing counterterrorism capabilities in Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen, Eritrea, and Djibouti. The United States is engaged in a continuous process of assessing options for working with other nations to assist them in this respect.

Additionally, the United States continues to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the U.S. Central, European, and Pacific Command areas of responsibility. These maritime operations have recently expanded into the U.S. Southern and Northern Command areas of responsibility to stop the movement, arming, or financing of international terrorists.

It is not possible to know at this time either the duration of combat operations or the scope and duration of the deployment of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter the terrorist threat to the United States. I will direct additional measures as necessary in the exercise of the U.S. right to self-defense and to protect U.S. citizens and interests. Such measures may include short-notice deployments of special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations throughout the world.

NATO-Led Kosovo Force (KFOR)

As noted in previous reports regarding U.S. contributions in support of peace-keeping efforts in Kosovo, most recently on November 14, 2003, the U.N. Security Council authorized member states to establish KFOR in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999. The mission of KFOR is to provide an international security presence in order to deter renewed hostilities; verify, and, if necessary, enforce the terms

of the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (which is now Serbia and Montenegro); enforce the terms of the Undertaking on Demilitarization and Transformation of the former Kosovo Liberation Army; provide day-to-day operational direction to the Kosovo Protection Corps; and maintain a safe and secure environment to facilitate the work of the U.N. Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Currently, there are 18 NATO nations contributing to KFOR in addition to the 18 non-NATO nations that provide forces. The U.S. contribution to KFOR in Kosovo is about 1,900 U.S. military personnel, or approximately 11 percent of KFOR's total strength of approximately 17,500 personnel. Additionally, U.S. military personnel occasionally operate from Macedonia, Albania, and Greece in support of KFOR operations. Eighteen non-NATO contributing countries also participate with NATO forces in providing military personnel and other support personnel to KFOR.

The U.S. forces have been assigned to a sector principally centered around Gnjilane in the eastern region of Kosovo. For U.S. KFOR forces, as for KFOR generally, maintaining a safe and secure environment remains the primary military task. The KFOR operates under NATO command and control and rules of engagement. The KFOR coordinates with and supports UNMIK at most levels, provides a security presence in towns, villages, and the countryside, and organizes checkpoints and patrols in key areas to provide security, protect minorities, resolve disputes, and help instill in the community a feeling of confidence. By the end of 2003, UNMIK had transferred all non-reserved competencies under the Constitutional Framework document to the Kosovar Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). The PISG includes the President, Prime Minister, and Kosovo Assembly, and has been in place since March 2002.

NATO continues formally to review KFOR's mission at 6-month intervals. These reviews provide a basis for assessing current force levels, future requirements, force structure, force reductions, and the eventual withdrawal of KFOR. NATO has adopted the

Joint Operations Area plan to regionalize and rationalize its force structure in the Balkans. The KFOR has transferred full responsibility for public safety and policing to the UNMIK international and local police forces throughout Kosovo except in the area of Mitrovica, where the responsibility is shared due to security concerns. The UNMIK international police and local police forces have also begun to assume responsibility for guarding patrimonial sites and established border-crossing checkpoints.

NATO-Led Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR)

As noted in previous reports regarding U.S. contributions in support of peace-keeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia, most recently on January 22, 2004, the U.N. Security Council authorized member states to continue SFOR for a period of 12 months in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1491 of July 11, 2003. The mission of SFOR is to provide a focused military presence in order to deter hostilities, stabilize and consolidate the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, contribute to a secure environment, and perform key supporting tasks including support to the international civil presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The U.S. force contribution to SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina is about 1,100 personnel. United States personnel comprise approximately 9 percent of the approximately 12,000 personnel assigned to SFOR. NATO has agreed to reduce the size of the force to 7,000 personnel by June 2004. United States participation is expected to be reduced proportionately. Currently, 16 NATO nations and 11 others provide military personnel or other support to SFOR. Most U.S. forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina are assigned to Multinational Brigade, North, headquartered near the city of Tuzla. The U.S. forces continue to support SFOR efforts to apprehend persons indicted for war crimes and to conduct counterterrorism operations.

Multinational Interim Force in Haiti

As I reported on February 25 and March 2, 2004, the United States deployed combat-equipped and combat-support personnel to

Haiti in order to secure key facilities, facilitate the continued repatriation of Haitian migrants, help create conditions in the capital for the anticipated arrival of the Multinational Interim Force authorized by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1529, and for other purposes consistent with Resolution 1529. Additional U.S. forces have since been deployed to Haiti, bringing the total of U.S. combat-equipped and combat-support forces in Haiti to approximately 1,800. It is possible that additional U.S. forces will be deployed to Haiti in the future; however, it is anticipated that U.S. forces will redeploy when the Multinational Interim Force has transitioned to a follow-on United Nations Stabilization Force.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 22.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

March 23, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. We've just had a very constructive Cabinet meeting. We talked about the need for us to remain strong in the war on terror. I assured our—my team that America is not going to blink in the face of the attacks that took place in Spain. As a matter of fact, we'll continue to rally the world to fight off terror.

Here at home, my economic advisers, economic team presented a very upbeat assessment about our economy. It's strong, and it's growing stronger. Inflation is low. Interest

rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. The job base is growing. There's a lot of signs that the economic plan we put in place are working. There's more work to do.

In order to make sure the economy continues to grow, in order to fight off economic isolationism, we've got to work to control the cost of health care, which makes it awfully difficult for many small businesses to provide health care for their employees. We need an energy plan. The Secretary of Energy discussed the need for an energy plan. We need to make sure that we have legal reform. Junk and frivolous lawsuits make it awfully difficult for people to find work here in the United States. We need to make sure that the regulations at the Federal, State, and local level are absolutely necessary. And finally, we need to make sure the tax cuts are permanent. Tax relief has stimulated economic growth, and they need to be permanent. And I call upon Congress once again to, at the very least, make sure the child credit, the marriage penalty, and the 10-percent bracket are made permanent now so that people can plan—consumers can plan and small-business owners can plan.

But I'm pleased with the report I received. I'm pleased with the progress. There is more work to do. I look forward to working with Congress to get it done.

I'll answer two questions here today. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press], wherever you are.

Q. Mr. President, over here.

The President. Yes, right there.

Counterterrorism Efforts

Q. Mr. President, there's been a lot of attention over the last couple days to a book written by your former counterterrorism adviser that suggests that you understated the threat of Al Qaida before September 11th and then rushed to blame Iraq after the terror attacks. Is there any basis at all in any of these allegations? And do you agree with the Republican Senator Chuck Hagel that the White House needs to take these charges more seriously and not just undermine Mr. Clarke's credibility?

The President. Well, the facts are these: George Tenet briefed me on a regular basis about the terrorist threats to the United

States of America, and had my administration had any information that terrorists were going to attack New York City on September the 11th, we would have acted. We have been chasing down Al Qaida ever since they attacked. We've captured or killed two-thirds of their known leaders. And we're still pursuing them, and we will continue to pursue them so long as I am the President of the United States.

I want to thank the troops involved. We've got a couple of thousand troops involved in Afghanistan that are hunting down Al Qaida in that part of the world. We've got intelligence officers all over the world collecting information so that we can act. We've got a strong network of cooperative governments trying to chase down terrorist money and to prevent that money from being spread around to cause harm.

I was on the phone today to Gerhard Schroeder, reminding them that we need to stay strong in the fight on terror. And I appreciated his strong comments today by phone, that he fully understood the stakes. We're making progress. There is more work to do. And this country will stay on the hunt. The best way to protect our country from further attack is to find the terrorists before they come to our homeland or anywhere else to inflict harm.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Hamas Threats/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. Are you worried about the threat from Hamas to attack U.S. targets over Israel's killing of Sheik Yassin? And were you troubled by his killing?

The President. Yes, I'm worried about terrorist groups targeting America. And we take every threat seriously in this administration. Nearly every morning that I come to work, I talk to George Tenet, FBI Director Mueller, and others about the threats to the United States. And there's still serious threats because of what we stand for. There are still people who want to harm our country. And so, whether it be an Hamas threat or an Al Qaida threat, we take them very seriously in this administration.

As far as the Middle East, it's a troubled region, and the attacks were troubling. There

needs to be a focused, concerted effort by all parties to fight terror. Any country has a right to defend itself from terror. Israel has the right to defend herself from terror. And as she does so, I hope she keeps consequences in mind as to how to make sure we stay on the path to peace. This administration is committed to finding a two-state solution—a two-state solution for the good of Israel, a two-state solution for the good of the Palestinian people. To this end, if the circumstances on the ground allow, I'll be sending a team back out to the Middle East next week to see if we can't keep the process alive, the process toward peace.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany. Reporters referred to Richard A. Clarke, former National Coordinator for Transnational Threats at the National Security Council; and Sheik Ahmed Yassin, founder of the Hamas terrorist organization, who was killed in an Israeli missile attack in Gaza City on March 22.

Remarks Honoring NCAA Fall Championship Teams

March 23, 2004

Thank you for coming. Behave yourself up on the balcony. [Laughter] That would be you. This is champions day here at the White House, and it is my honor to welcome some great champs. We are proud you're here.

I want to thank those who represent the universities. Here present: James Moeser, the chancellor, and Dick Baddour, the athletic director of the University of North Carolina. We appreciate you being here. Mike Garrett, who is the athletic director of the University of Southern California, is with us today. Bill Jenkins, who is the president of LSU, along with Roger Ogden, who is the chairman of the LSU Board of Supervisors, and Skip Bertman, who is the athletic director, we're proud you're here.

As you can probably see, we've got some Members of the United States Congress with us here today, and there seems to be quite a large and vibrant delegation from the great State of Louisiana. Senator John Breaux and

Mary Landrieu are with us today, Mighty Tiger fans. Richard Baker and Jim McCreery and Chris John and Rodney Alexander, thank you all for coming. We're proud you're here. From California, Congressman Chris Cox and Diane Watson are with us today. Thank you all for coming. Congressmen David Price and Mike McIntyre from North Carolina are with us as well. Thank you all for being here.

First, it's my honor to recognize the football cochamps this year, LSU and USC, fantastic group of athletes and teams that battled to the end. Any good team obviously requires good players; these teams have got good players, but it also requires really good coaches. Pete Carroll and Nick Saban are two of the finest coaches in the United States. We're glad you're here. There was quite a lot of discussion about who really was number one. My attitude is, the South Lawn is a pretty good size. *[Laughter]* Never mind. *[Laughter]* I appreciate the class of these two programs and the grace they demonstrated under pressure. Both schools, LSU and USC, are, in fact, national champs. And we're proud to call you national champs.

Obviously, in order to be a national champ, you've got to field fine players at every position. I particularly want to say something about USC tailback Reggie Bush. Where is he? His teammates call him "the President"—*[laughter]*—"President Bush." You must feel pretty comfortable here at the White House, "President Bush." *[Laughter]*

I also want to say one other word about an individual who is not with us today, and that is Jeff Boss, who was the equipment manager for 24 years for LSU. Last October he died from cancer. The Tigers named their locker room in Jeff's honor, and they kept his family in their prayers throughout the season. You all know and I know that Jeff would be incredibly proud of the fact that LSU won its first national championship in 45 years. May God bless Jeff and his family, and may God bless both the USC team and the LSU football team. Thank you all for coming.

Now it's my honor to welcome back the Lady Trojans volleyball team from USC. They did pretty well this year. They were 35-0. *[Laughter]* Last year, I had the honor of welcoming my friend Mick Haley here to

the White House. See, Mick used to coach the University of Texas volleyball team, and I used to work out at the gym there, and he used to come over and give me pointers all the time about how to strengthen up and look a little better. My advice is, when you see the Governor of California, he doesn't need many pointers, Mick. *[Laughter]*

Mick's a good man. He coaches a group of great ladies who are, in fact, national champs. I asked how many of them are coming back next year. Of course, one of them asked if I was. *[Laughter]* But he has a lot of returners for next year, and this group of champs is welcome here at the White House any time. Thank you for coming.

Then we honor Coach Anson Dorrance's UNC Tarheel women's soccer team. Anson's got a pretty good record. He's coached for 25 years, and he's won 18 national championships. That's the sign of a good coach who knows good talent and knows how to mold everybody into a good team. This year they were 32-0. When I had my honor of having my picture taken with the team, I asked what was the closest match, closest game. One of the ladies said it was 3-0. That's a heck of a team, 32-0 and the closest game is 3-0. UNC gets a lot of attention for its basketball team, but let me remind you of what the legendary coach Dean Smith said. He said, "UNC is a women's soccer school." And once again, these ladies have proven Coach Dean Smith correct. Welcome back.

Jerry Yeagley is here with the Indian Hoosier men's soccer team. He's been with the Hoosiers for three decades, and in those 30 years they have won 6 national titles. He retired last fall with 544 wins, more than any coach in NCAA Division I history. Coach Yeagley, we're proud of you. We're proud of the team you've brought here. We're proud of your dedication to athletics. I want to thank you for working so hard to teach the young men of your teams the difference between right and wrong and how to play as a team. Today we honor your coaching career at the same time we honor the great Indiana Hoosier soccer team. Welcome.

These are impressive athletes behind me, but I think if you really look beyond the athletics, you'll find some decent and compassionate people as well. These athletes, in the

most part, understand they have a responsibility to uphold to the communities in which they live. They understand it's one thing to be a champ on the field; it's another to be a champ off the field by setting the right example for some youngster who is wondering what it means to be a champ.

By sending good messages about right and wrong behavior and by volunteering in their community, the USC football team makes a trip to the USC Children's Hospital every year to visit patients and to give gifts and to sign autographs. You know what they're doing? They're bringing some sunshine into somebody's life, is what they're doing. The LSU football players visit hospitals, and they teach elementary school children how to read. They're taking their talents off the football field and putting them in the classroom, so some child in Louisiana has a chance to realize a better life. The USC women's volleyball team raised money and participated together in the Race for the Cure for breast cancer research. They took their athleticism and put it into practice to help save somebody's life. The UNC women's soccer team is helping to build a Habitat for Humanity house near the campus. They're using their God-given talents to make sure somebody has a place to live. And finally, the Indiana soccer players volunteer as coaches and mentors for youth soccer teams in Bloomington, Indiana.

All these players have understood it's important to serve something greater than yourself in life. They learned to do so by working together for a team, and they're learning to do so by making the community in which they live a better place for every citizen.

It is my honor to welcome true champs here to the White House. I congratulate you for your hard work. I wish you all the best for the—whatever the future may hold. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:21 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Pete Carroll, head football coach, University of Southern California; Nick Saban, head football coach, Louisiana State University; Mick Haley, head coach, University of Southern California women's volleyball; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Anson Dorrance, head coach, University of North Carolina women's

soccer; Dean Smith, former head coach, University of North Carolina men's basketball; and Jerry Yeagley, former head coach, University of Indiana men's soccer.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to Dorothy Height

March 24, 2004

Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker and Leader Frist, distinguished Members of Congress, I want to thank the authors of the bill that bestowed this high honor, Senator Clinton and Senator Levin and Congresswoman Watson. Thank you all for being here to honor such a fine American.

Since the American Revolution, Congress has awarded Gold Medals to the heroes of our country. And today we recognize a citizen who has helped to extend the promise of our founding to millions. We recognize a hero.

I'm so pleased to join with the Congress in honoring this good and gracious woman and the great life she has lived. And what a life it's been. If you know—in the presence of Dorothy Height, you kind of—she's such a calming influence. You realize you're in the presence of grace. But you've got to understand what she's done to realize that behind the grace, there's a will of steel and absolute determination.

She's been a leader and a witness to a lot of our great history. We've heard a lot of talk about the "Big Six." As Leader Pelosi said—I think it was Leader Pelosi—"I sure would have liked to have been in the room. I would have liked to have seen Dorothy Height interface with some of the giants of the civil rights movement." The truth of the matter is, she was the giant of the civil rights movement. They were interfacing with her. *[Laughter]*

She was there when they planned the march. She was a few steps away from Dr. King's great speech at the Lincoln Memorial. She helped integrate the YWCA. She was in the South during the sixties setting up freedom schools and voter registration drives. She was in Mississippi bringing white and

black women together. She was in Birmingham in 1963 comforting the mothers of that city. Condi Rice was there at the time. She's told me the story about what it was like. It would have taken a presence like Dorothy Height to instill hope and calm and confidence during that very troubled time. She helped create the Black Family Reunion. She's done a lot.

She's a woman of enormous accomplishment. She's a friend of First Ladies like Eleanor Roosevelt and Hillary Rodham Clinton. She's known every President since Dwight David Eisenhower. She's told every President what she thinks since Dwight David Eisenhower. *[Laughter]*

I find it really interesting that Dorothy Height has always stressed the importance of institutions closest to us, our families, our churches, and our neighborhoods. She understands that those institutions are important in shaping the character of an individual and, therefore, the character of the Nation.

In her recently published memoir, Dr. Height wrote, "It is in the neighborhood and communities where the world begins. That is where children grow and families are developed, where people exercise their power to change their lives." Incredibly wise words from a strong leader.

Few Americans have done more than Dorothy Height to help their fellow citizens discover and exercise their own life-changing power. Dorothy has always remembered what her mother told her when she was a girl of 8 in 1920. She recalls, "My mother, always so gentle and so firm, put her arms around me. She said, 'You're a nice girl, Dorothy. You're a smart girl. And there are many things you can do.' " Mom was right. There was a lot of things she could do, and she did them, and America is a better place for it.

We're proud of you, Dorothy. We're honored to be in your presence. You're about to receive a Gold Medal, but perhaps the best medal we can give as a society is to continue to work for equality and justice for all.

It's now my honor to join Speaker Hastert and Senator Stevens, the Senate—the President pro tem of the Senate, in presenting this high award, this important award, to a great American.

May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:02 p.m. in the Rotunda at the U.S. Capitol.

Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce March 24, 2004

Thank you all. Thank you for that warm welcome. *Sientese, por favor. Bienvenidos.* I'm so glad you're here. Thanks for having me. *[Laughter]* I love to be in the presence of entrepreneurs, people who are willing to dream and to work to realize their dreams, which is really what America has been, is, and should be all about.

I appreciate the fact that it's the entrepreneurs here in America that take the risks and create the new jobs, do the hard work that's helping our economy go forward. You see, by pursuing your own dreams you're making the American Dream possible for more. You're helping to make sure that others can realize the potential of our country. Every day you show faith in what we stand for in America, and I'm here to tell you, the country is grateful to you. And I want to thank you for what you do.

What I want to do is talk about, today, the challenges facing our economy and how to put good policies in place to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of America—that's what we're really here to talk about—and talk about the need for—to make sure we've got a small-business sector that is vibrant, strong, growing, confident, optimistic about the future. And there are some things Government can do. Government can't create wealth, but it can create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish. And that's what I'm here to talk about today.

I want to thank Hector—he's the Small Business Administration head—for joining me. I had the honor of meeting Hector, Sr., right before we came out here. Hector and I are lucky. We've both got good dads. *[Laughter]* So, Hector Barreto, Sr., I appreciate you here. He's the co-founder of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

I appreciate my friend John Snow, who is the Secretary of Treasury. Mr. Secretary, thanks for coming to share some thoughts.

I appreciate your wisdom. He's a smart guy. [Laughter] He knows what I know, that it's best not to be thinking about economic theory; it's best to be thinking how to unleash the great creativity of the American people. It's the best economic policy there is.

I appreciate so very much J.R. Gonzales, the chairman and acting president of the U.S. Chamber. I want to thank Tina Cordova, the vice chair, for having me here. I see my friend Massey Villarreal. He's an old friend from Texas. I don't know if there's any *Texanos* here. [Applause] Yes. Tell them hello back home. [Laughter] Tell them I remember where I came from, and I'm not going to change because of polls and focus groups. I'm going to take the—I'm bringing the principles that I was raised with here. I'm going to stand on principle. I'm going to work as hard as I can for the American people, and I'm not going to change what I believe just because some are trying to change me.

And one of the things I believe is this country is a great country. That's what I believe. I believe it is a great country for a lot of reasons. You know what I believe? I believe it's a great country because if you're willing to work for a dream, you can own your own business. To me, that's great, when somebody can start with little and end up with a lot, and that's what we've got to encourage here in this country.

I want to remind you that we have reason to be optimistic about the economy, particularly when you realize what we have been through as a nation. Beginning in 2001, the economy headed into a recession. The definition of a recession, of course, is three quarters of negative growth. So in the first three quarters of 2001, we were going backwards. That made it hard. I'm sure many of you remember the period. If you're a small-business owner, it's difficult to survive in a recession. If you're a worker, there's a lot of uncertainty during a recession.

The stock market, by the way, had begun its decline in March of 2000, and that affects a lot of people. It affects people's confidence when they see their savings begin to dwindle.

As well—we began to recover, by the way, and then we got attacked. And the attack did a couple of things. Obviously, it changed how

one must conduct foreign policy. In other words, we have to deal with threats early, before they materialize. Oceans no longer protect us like we used to think. And therefore, when we see a threat, we have to deal with it. But the other way it affected us, it hurt our economy. Make no mistake about it, we lost nearly a million jobs as a result of the attack. But we began to recover from that. We're a strong country. We said loud and clear to the enemy, "You can't intimidate us. We refuse to quit. We're determined to move forward as a nation."

And then we found out that some of—corporate citizens or U.S. citizens who happen to be in corporate America didn't tell the truth, and that hurt our confidence. See, the system counts on people being honest and open, particularly when it comes to cashflow numbers and earnings per share. And the dishonesty of some in corporate America cost people their jobs and cost a lot of savings, but we acted. We passed tough reforms. As you can see on your TV screens, wrongdoers are being held to account. The message is, we're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

And then we overcame a significant hurdle as well. I just told you we had to deal with threats before they materialize. I made a tough but correct decision to join with the rest of the world—or the United Nations Security Council, and say, "Disarm, Saddam Hussein. For the sake of world security and world peace, you disarm. We've told you to do so for 12 years, and you haven't. Now you have one final chance to do so." And he wouldn't, of course, and so we led a coalition to remove Saddam Hussein. He was in defiance, and now he's in jail. And by the way, the world is better off for it, and America is more secure.

But that decision affected our economy. The decisionmaking process affected the economy. Remember turning on your TV screen and seeing "March to War." That's an incredibly negative thought. And in the world of finance and job creation, it's important to be hopeful and optimistic. People are more likely to invest if they're hopeful and optimistic about the future. And when you're looking on your TV screens and you see

“March to War,” it made it difficult for people to see a better future. Now we’re marching to peace. The march to war is over, and the march to peace has begun, and the world is becoming more peaceful.

My point to you is that we faced a lot of challenges in a brief period of time. In 3 years, we’ve overcome a lot because of the strength and the character of the American people and the strength of the entrepreneurial spirit. Think about where we are today. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. That’s helpful, by the way, if you’re a businessowner. Mortgage rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. That’s what we want. If we want people—we want people—more people to own their own business. We also want people to own their own home. It’s part of the American experience, and it’s happening here.

Manufacturing activity is on the rise. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the seventies, eighties, and nineties. Thanks to our productive workers—and we’re very productive—and to the visionary business leaders, small and large, the United States is the fastest growing major industrialized economy in the world.

We have overcome a lot because of the strength of our country. And members of the Hispanic Chamber are playing an essential part in the progress, so I’m here to thank you for that. According to the most recent data, Hispanic-owned companies employ about 1.4 million Americans and carry a payroll of nearly \$30 billion. Our economy is stronger and society is better because Hispanic-owned businesses are thriving all across the country.

One of the main reasons why the recession that I described to you is the shortest in modern history is because we acted with tax relief. And I want to describe to you why I felt it was so strong to promote tax relief here in Washington. First, if an American has more of their own money in their pocket, they’re more likely to demand a good or a service. And in our marketplace, when somebody demands a good or a service, somebody is going to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces that good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep

a job or find work. That’s the economic theory behind the tax relief.

But there’s really more to it than that. When you reduce taxes on everybody who pays individual income taxes, the way many small businesses are structured in America, you’re really helping the small-business sector. If you’re a sole proprietorship or a Subchapter S corporation, you pay tax at the individual income-tax rate, and therefore, when you’re cutting income taxes on the individual, you’re really cutting taxes on small businesses. And when a small business gets tax relief, it means they’ve got more money in their company treasury in which to invest and/or expand. That’s what tax relief does.

As well, as you may recall, we raised the amount of money you can deduct for capital purchases from 25,000 to \$100,000 for small businesses, all aimed at encouraging investment, all aimed at stimulating the economy. Because when you go out and invest, somebody has to make the product that you’re purchasing, and when somebody makes that product, somebody is more likely to find work or keep a job.

As well we did some other things in the tax relief. We increased the child credit to \$1,000 per child. That means it makes it easier for moms and dads to raise their families. We reduced the marriage penalty. What kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage? It’s not a very wise Tax Code, so we reduced the marriage penalty.

We also did something else. And that is we put the death tax on its way to extinction. I think that’s important for—see, I think that’s important to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit. Look, if you’re a small-business owner, like many of you are, you know that when you’re profitable you get to pay taxes to Uncle Sam. But the death tax means you not only pay him when you’re living, you pay him when you die. And that makes it awfully hard for you, who’ve started your own business, who’ve built up your assets, to pass on your assets to whomever you want.

Most small businesses know what I’m talking about. You know, you can’t—you have to sell the business just to pay the inheritance taxes. And that dims the entrepreneurial spirit. It doesn’t increase the entrepreneurial

spirit. It makes it more difficult for the entrepreneur to realize his or her dream, because part of the dream of the entrepreneur is to leave his or her business to whomever he or she wants. That's part of the experience, and the death tax gets in the way. It's a lousy tax. And we passed good policy to get rid of it, for the sake of the entrepreneurial spirit.

What I'm telling you is, these are—this is what we—when you hear the word “progrowth,” these are progrowth policies, all aimed at growing not the Government but all aimed at growing the private sector. Seventy percent of most new jobs are—70 percent of new jobs are created by small businesses. And so when you hear me talk progrowth, we're talking about progrowth in the small-business sector.

What's interesting about the economy today, and you know this as well as I do, that the economy is experiencing some change, some fundamental changes. Take, for example, productivity. Productivity has grown faster over the last 2 years than at any time in more than 50 years, because of new technologies, technologies that are changing the way we do business. Productivity means one worker can produce 10 widgets today, when it took—one worker could produce 2 widgets in the same amount of time in years past. It's kind of a simple definition. We call that a Texas definition. *[Laughter]*

Higher productivity is good, by the way. It's a good thing for the economy. It's good for your business. It helps you—when you become more productive, it means you're better at competing. You can make a product that satisfies consumer demand in a more efficient and, sometimes, less costly way. And that's good.

Productive businesses are more likely to grow, and that's good. That's what we want. We want growth in order for people to work. Productive workers receive better wages. If you're working in America and you become more productive, you get paid better. That's just a fact of life. The quality of your life goes up. The more—the better worker you are, the more productive you are, the more likely you're going to make more money for your family.

A more productive economy leads to greater national wealth. In other words, it helps the individual, but it also helps the Nation. We become a wealthier nation.

But there's some challenges with an economy that is more productive. Think of it this way: Companies fill new orders and expand operations without needing to hire new workers. If you're more productive, you can expand your business to meet expanding demand, and you may not need to hire an additional worker to do so. And that creates a problem for somebody looking for work. And that's what I'm interested in, by the way. You know, the unemployment rate is low, but so long as anybody is looking for work and can't find a job, it says to me, we've got an issue here in America.

The other thing that productivity requires is an acknowledgment that new jobs require new skills. If you think about it, things are changing in the workplace, and we better have an education system that encourages—that allows workers to find the new skills necessary to be able to meet the challenges and new jobs of the 21st century.

There's workers who are concerned here in the country. I hear it all the time. There are workers concerned about jobs going overseas. They're worried about changes in the economy. They wonder whether or not, as the economy changes, he or she will have the skills necessary to survive. They're worried about whether their children can find a good job close to home. They're worried about whether or not their health care and their benefits, retirement benefits, will exist.

Here in Washington, you hear the economists say we're in a time of transition. I just want people to understand—know that I know that transition is not easy for people in our country. Transition unsettles the nerves. And so there's some things we've got to do to help, to help our workers and to help our entrepreneurs. And that—and I'm talking about something more than just unemployment insurance. There's some strategies that need to be in place, progrowth, proworker strategies to make sure that the American experience is reached all throughout the country.

One thing we can't do is go back to the old policies of tax and spend in Washington.

I think you're going to find the old tax-and-spend philosophy will drain the entrepreneurial spirit, because when you hear "tax and spend," it means somebody has got to pay more taxes. And guess who gets stuck with them? Small-business owners, people who are beginning to realize their dreams.

And the other thing we've got to do is reject economic isolationism. We can't isolate ourself from the world and expect to have a growing economy. There are some here—I'm just going to tell you what you're going to hear, when you hear this, "We're going to raise taxes on the rich." Just remember, most small businesses are sole proprietorships and Subchapter S corporations. And guess what? If you're one of those, you're rich, according to the definition here in Washington, DC. Raising taxes on small businesses would be a disaster for our economy.

I know some who want to build barriers to trade. You hear a lot of talk about trade and the way to deal with certain problems is to wall us off from the world. I think it's wrong. I think it's bad policy, and I think a lot of Hispanic-owned businesses know what I'm talking about. Rather than building barriers, we need to break down barriers so that the American entrepreneur and American companies can sell American products on every continent in the world. The best policy to make sure jobs stay here at home and somebody can find a job is to open up markets for U.S. products. See, pessimistic people say, "We can't compete. Therefore, let's throw up walls." Optimistic folks say, "We can compete with anybody just so long as the playing field is level." And good policy says, "Let's make the playing field level."

Look at it this way: Five percent of the world's population is right here in America—means 95 percent of potential customers are elsewhere. Ninety-seven percent of all U.S. exporters are small or medium-sized businesses. It's a pretty interesting statistic, isn't it? A lot of people in America think "export"; they think "big guys." The facts are that small businesses export a lot. Companies with fewer than 20 employees—employees—make up nearly 70 percent of all exporting firms. Of all the businesses that sell overseas, sell a product in demand overseas, 70 per-

cent are U.S. companies with less than 20 employees. That's small business.

If we allow ourselves to fall into the trap of trade wars and throwing up barriers and walls between America and other markets, those small businesses will have little chance to survive. When you hear people talk about trade, I want you to remember this: Hispanic-owned businesses are selling car and truck parts, food, construction equipment, financial services, manufactured goods, and products all over the globe.

I know my friends from Texas have realized and seen the benefits of NAFTA. Our trade with our friend Mexico has tripled over the past decade. When you triple trade, it means there's opportunity on both sides of the border for people to realize their dreams. We must not allow people to raise economic barriers.

Look what it would do to companies like Ruiz Foods in Dinuba, California, where I went. The Ruiz family started in the kitchen. The story, by the way, may sound familiar to many of you here. It may not have started in the kitchen. It may start—your business may have started in a garage, or it may have started sitting around a dining room table. In this case, they started in a kitchen using Grandma Rosie's pots and pans to make enchiladas. They now produce 3.5 million burritos a day. And I want you to know, they are selling some of their frozen foods into Mexico. That's a pretty darn good burrito. *[Laughter]*

Kim Ruiz Beck, the company's vice chairman—I think Kim is the daughter of the founder—said it was tough to break into the Mexican market. "At first, there was some skepticism about how authentic we are. But there's a lot of trust in products that are made in the United States of America." What she said is darn wise. There is a lot of trust in the products that say "Made in the USA." And therefore, it makes sense from a policy perspective to encourage more products to be sold that say "Made in the USA."

If you're a person looking for work, you want the United States of America selling products and services from our country. It's good for job creation. Presidents of both parties have agreed that trade is good for the American economy. For over 50 years, that's

been the case. In other words, we've opened up our markets. And it's been good for consumers, frankly, that people are able to sell into the markets. It's been good for small business when you're trying to buy something.

But the real challenge is to make sure other countries open up their markets. That's the challenge. As opposed to saying, "We're going to close our market, and we don't care about you," we ought to be saying the opposite: "Our markets are open, and if you expect to trade with us, we want you to open yours." And so when you hear about trade agreements, that's what we're doing. We're making sure the playing field is level. We've done a trade agreement with Singapore and Chile. We recently completed negotiations with Morocco, Australia, and our friends in Central America.

What's that mean? You hear "trade agreement"—let me see if I can shed some light on what it means. There are 6,000 small and medium-sized businesses in America that export to Chile. When we opened up an agreement with Chile, it made it easier for 6,000 small and medium-sized businesses to sell product. When people are able to sell product into Chile, it means they're going to—likely somebody—they're more likely to hire somebody. That's why it's easy to connect jobs and trade. That's what I'm trying to explain. When you're selling into markets, it makes it more likely somebody is going to find work.

There are 4,000 medium and small business that export to Costa Rica; 3,000 export to Honduras. By making the playing field more level, there is a greater opportunity that the small businesses around the United States will be able to find new markets and sell additional products and goods and services, which means somebody is more likely to find a job.

A second way to make sure that jobs stay at home and that somebody is likely to find a job is to make sure that America is the best place in the world to do business, is to make sure the environment is right for capital formation, for business expansion, to make it easier, not harder, for our small businesses to exist and thrive and grow.

There are some things we can do. One, there needs to be less regulations at the Federal, State, and local level on businesses and small businesses. It just doesn't make any sense for you to feel like—I see people nodding their heads. I mean, you fill out a lot of forms. I can't guarantee whether the form has ever been read, much less looked at. *[Laughter]* But nevertheless, endless regulations make it harder to be competitive and make it harder for businesses to stay at home.

We've got legal problems in our country. Too many small-business owners get sued. There are too many frivolous and junk lawsuits. We need tort reform in America in order to make sure the job base can grow and expand. We're taking on some tort reform here in Washington. We've got a good class-action bill moving through the Congress. We've got some asbestos reform moving through the Congress. The trial lawyers here are awfully tough. I hope the small-business community is even tougher and works with Members of the United States Senate to make sure we can get meaningful tort reform out of the United States Congress, which will make it more likely somebody will be able to find a job.

We need to make sure we help small businesses control health care costs. I've spent a lot of time talking to small businesses in forums around the country. I hear—a lot—people saying, "I can't afford health care anymore." It's hard to be a compassionate employer if you can't provide health care to your employees. There are some practical things we can do.

One, Congress needs to pass what's called associated health care plans, to allow small businesses to pool across jurisdictional boundary—pool risk across jurisdictional boundary, which will give small businesses in the aggregate the same purchasing power that big businesses have in order to drive down the cost of health care.

I hope you all look into what's called health savings account—it's a part of the new Medicare law that I've signed—that will allow employees to save tax-free for routine medical expenses. You'll be able to contribute tax-free into your account, save tax-free in the account, withdraw money tax-free out of the account to pay for routine medical expenses.

And their employers can provide coverage for major medical issues or major illnesses or injuries. It's a reasonable way to control costs. It's an interesting new product that's now being developed that I think you—small businesses will benefit, and so will your employees, most importantly.

And finally, one of the reasons why health care costs are on the rise is there are—again, there's too many frivolous and junk lawsuits. There's a lot of docs who practice defensive medicine. Why? Because they're getting sued all the time. It's kind of like a giant lottery. Medicare liability lawsuits are like lotteries. The only problem is there's only one winner, and those are the people who take 40 percent of the win. That would be your lawyers, the trial lawyers. And we need to have national medical liability reform now. It passed the Congress. It is stuck in the Senate—passed the House, stuck in the Senate.

To control health care costs, we need to have a reasonable legal system. If people get hurt, they ought to be able to sue a doc, but the rewards need to be reasonable. And we need to do things to cut down on these massive amounts of frivolous lawsuits. Frivolous lawsuits affect your business. They affect your business when you get sued, and they affect the cost of doing business.

We also got to make sure we have affordable and reliable supplies of energy. If you're a small business in the manufacturing world, and you're wondering whether or not your gas bill is going to be—spikes or you're wondering whether or not—whether you're going to get electricity at all, it makes it awfully hard to plan and to grow. So we need a reasonable energy policy. We need to encourage conservation, of course. We need to work on alternative sources of energy. We need clean coal technology. We need to explore for more natural gas. But one thing is for certain: In order for our economic security and national security, we need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I think something that will benefit our economy and help the small-business sector is to reform our immigration laws to help—I proposed a worker program here that says we can match a willing foreign worker with a employer in America so long as an American is not willing to do the job. Look, I know

a lot of you are wondering whether or not you're hiring somebody who you should be hiring. And that's because the system is broken down. That's why you wonder that. My attitude is, rather than have people live in the shadows of our society, let's have an honest system. Let's say that if you're—if you need a worker, there's a way to help expedite your search for somebody in our country. But if you can't find anybody, you ought to be able to hire anybody you want, and therefore, we ought to have a temporary-worker card for people.

And it will help rout out the corruption and the fraud. You know what I'm talking about. The paperwork, you don't know where it comes from if you're hiring in the construction world. It doesn't make sense to have a system where Border Patrol is kind of searching for workers simply coming to our—people coming to our country to make a living for their families. They ought to be looking for terrorists and narcotraffickers, smugglers. And so a worker system would take the burden off of many at our borders.

People often ask me, “Do you support amnesty?” I don't. You see—and the reason I don't is because I'm afraid it would further illegal immigration as well as reward those who haven't lived to the law. We've got a lot of honest people who are trying to become citizens of the United States of America, who have stood in line for a long period of time, and it doesn't seem that we ought to have a worker system that allows somebody to cut in line. That's not fair. One of the things we are in America is we're fair. And people should—people who have been in line shouldn't be penalized for having taken the legal route up to now.

But one thing is for certain: We've got to respect people who are in our country. We've got to treat them with decency, and when the system is broke, we need to reform it.

Finally, in the Tax Code—you probably know this, but all the tax cuts I've described are set to expire. It's kind of hard to explain it, but that's just the way it is here in Washington. [Laughter] Child credit is going down next year, unless Congress acts. The marriage penalty goes up next year, unless Congress acts. The 10-percent bracket that had been expanded to include more people will go

back to its original form, unless Congress acts. All tax rates go up in 2011, and the death tax comes—the death tax doesn't expire after 2011. So it expires, and then in 2011 it shows back up. By the way, in 2010, that's going to make a lot of interesting choices for people. *[Laughter]* Anyway, it's hard to explain any rationale behind it. *[Laughter]*

There's uncertainty in the Tax Code. If you're somebody thinking about investing and you've got an investment plan, a capital investment plan scheduled out, and you're uncertain whether or not you're going to get \$100,000 worth of deduction or \$25,000 worth of deduction, it makes you less bold when it comes to expanding your business.

Uncertainty in the Tax Code creates indecision amongst people that we want to feel comfortable making decisions, particularly when it comes to buying capital goods or expanding the job base. And so rather than increasing taxes to pay for new programs, I've got a better idea for Congress. To keep the economy expanding, they need to make the tax cuts permanent.

Finally, I do want to talk about how to make sure workers are better prepared—workers are prepared for the jobs that you're able to offer. There are some new jobs being created, quite a few, as a matter of fact. They're just in different sectors. I remember going down to North Carolina and hearing a textile worker talk about getting skills necessary to become a health worker. And in this particular case, the person was doing great. But you notice there had to be a transition. There are new jobs being created in fields in which some people don't have the skills necessary to fill the jobs. And that's of concern to governments at all levels. It should be.

The place to start with making sure workers have got the skills is in early grades. I worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. Let me tell you the theory behind the act. I believe every child can learn. I know there are some circumstances when certain children are just shuffled through the school system, the "hard to educate." Those are generally kids, by the way, whose parents don't speak English as a first language or inner-city kids. And we had a system in some school districts where—"Just

shuffle through, please. Let's just get them out of the system." And as a result, too many of our children ended up not being able to read at grade level, and that's really sad.

So we passed a new law called the No Child Left Behind Act that said, "We're going to increase Federal money for Title I students." Those are the poorest students. But now we're going to ask the question whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract. For the first time, the Federal Government is saying, "In return for Federal money, measure. Measure because we believe every child can learn. We believe every child has worth, and we want to know. And we want to know early, before it's too late."

By measuring, we're able to determine whether a curriculum works. By measuring, we're able to determine whether a child needs extra help. There's money in the Federal budget to provide the extra help. By measuring, we can find out whether or not society is doing its duty to make sure every child gets a quality education. The No Child Left Behind Act is a great piece of legislation, and I will defend it with every fiber in my body.

There are other things we need to do. There needs to be remedial education for high school kids. Listen, because we're late in the accountability process, we didn't know for a while whether or not kids were getting shuffled through, and there's probably some in high school that can't read. And now is the time to find those souls and make sure they read.

Laura went down to a program in Florida the other day, a remedial education program, where they're able to take 10th graders, with intense education in a 6-month period, to get them up to—nearly to grade level or at grade level. There's some great things that are happening in education. The Federal Government has a responsibility to help State and local governments focus resources to make sure people aren't left behind.

By the way, we need to do the same thing with math. It's hard, if you're an employer, to hire somebody who doesn't have math skills. I guess, maybe there's some businesses where it's not needed, but a lot of businesses, it's important to have the basic skills in math.

I tell you, another interesting opportunity is community colleges. Everybody can identify with the community college in the community in which they live, and there's some great community colleges. The interesting thing about community colleges is, is that the curriculum should be flexible. And when you can find a place of higher learning that's got a flexible curriculum, it means if you're an employer or a group of employers, you can go to your community college and say, "Look, we need nurses. Help us train nurses. Adjust your education system for the jobs which actually exist."

We've got a bold initiative coming out of Washington here to help the community colleges help people find jobs. And the other day, I was in Mesa Community College in the Phoenix area. I met with a lady who had worked as a graphic artist. I think she told me she had been there as a graphic artist for, like, 13, 15 years, something like that. Anyway, she goes back to the community college and takes a 6-month course, if I'm not mistaken, that enabled her to become hired by Cable One Company. She made more money in her first year at Cable One than she had made in her last year as a graphic artist.

And it's important for us to provide those opportunities for as many people as possible. People are going to have to want to do this, by the way. Government—we can't say, "Be ambitious." We can't say, "It's—you must change your habits." But we can say, "Here's an opportunity for you, and we encourage you to gain the skills necessary so you can become an employable person," because this economy is generating jobs. And we want to be able to match the jobs with the skills needed for the job with the people who are looking for work, and that's a challenge. And that's something that I'm committed to doing.

A couple of other things that I want to say, now that I got you. *[Laughter]* There was a period of time in the seventies and eighties—I don't know if you remember this or not—when a lot of people doubted America, doubted whether we can compete. Do you remember that? The Japanese were going to be the predominate economy in the

world, some would say, or the Germans would be. It was claimed that we weren't flexible enough. Our companies were—we had rigid rules, that the workers were not disciplined enough, that the American products really weren't good enough to compete. That's what a lot of people thought. Those were what we called the pessimists. And they were wrong. They were just flat wrong, obviously. I mean, America—we improved. We changed. We're flexible. Our education systems began to work better. The entrepreneurial spirit remained strong. We're the greatest economy in the world now, and it's important that we keep it that way with good policies.

The economy is vibrant today. There are still people who hurt and looking for work, and that's why we've got to think about pro-growth, pro-entrepreneurial policies. We've got to be confident. But think about this. We sell computer chips to Japan. We produce BMWs in Greer, South Carolina, for export to Germany. We're exporting California wine to France. *[Laughter]* And we're selling Mexican food to Mexico.

The role of Government is to get policies in place that encourage growth, that enhance the spirit of ownership and rely upon the American people. It's a safe bet, when we get the policies right, things will be great here in America, because—you know why? The American people are great. This country is full of people—our country is full of people who can rise to the challenge. Many people want to own something and, therefore, are willing to work for it, responsible, honorable, decent citizens who love their family, love their communities, and love their country. And it's a privilege to be the President of such a grand nation.

Thank you for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. at the Renaissance Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Massey Villarreal, member, Board of Directors, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Memorandum on Determination To Waive Military Coup-Related Provision of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2004, With Respect to Pakistan

March 24, 2004

Presidential Determination No. 2004–26

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Determination to Waive Military Coup-Related Provision of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2004, with Respect to Pakistan

Pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including Public Law 107–57, as amended by section 2213 of Public Law 108–106, I hereby determine that, with respect to Pakistan, a waiver of any provision of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2004 (section 508 of Public Law 108–199, Division D), that prohibits direct assistance to the government of any country whose duly elected head of government was deposed by decree or military coup:

- would facilitate the transition to democratic rule in Pakistan; and
- is important to United States efforts to respond to, deter, or prevent acts of international terrorism.

Accordingly, I hereby waive, with respect to Pakistan, any such provision.

You are authorized and directed to transmit this determination to the Congress and to arrange for its publication in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of this content of this memorandum.

Remarks to the Radio and Television Correspondents' Association Dinner

March 24, 2004

Thank you. Thanks for inviting me—finally. [Laughter] And thank you for honoring David Bloom. It was a fantastic speech you gave for a man you loved.

I am sorry Laura couldn't be here, and I'm sorry Secretary Rumsfeld is not here either. The guy constantly surprises me. Do you know what Rummy's favorite TV show is? "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy." [Laughter] My Cabinet could take some pointers from watching that show. In fact, I'm going to have the Fab Five do a make over on Ashcroft. [Laughter]

Anyway, it's nice to be with you. A couple of years ago when I was here, I read from my book of "Misarticulations." [Laughter] Fortunately, my verbal phonation and electrocution—[laughter]—have improved. So tonight I'm going to do one of my slide shows. These are actual, unstaged photos pulled from the files of the White House Photo Office. So, ladies and gentlemen, I present a White House election-year album.

As you know, the contest with my opponent is going to be a slugfest. I'm feeling good. [Laughter] I'm feeling ready. [Laughter] I'm psyching myself up for the fight. [Laughter]

I knew it was going to be a tough campaign when Karl Rove started dressing like this. [Laughter]

And this is Condi Rice, of course. Here I am trying to explain John Kerry's foreign policy. [Laughter]

I have to admit it really ticked me off when Democrats questioned my National Guard service in Alabama. Here's a photo proving that I was in Alabama fulfilling my duties. [Laughter]

Political campaigns always have their unexpected moments. This next photo is when I heard that Senator McCain said he was considering being Kerry's running mate. [Laughter]

The next one was taken a couple of months ago. I had just gotten word that Howard Dean had lost Iowa. [Laughter]

In addition to campaign calls, I also spend a lot of time on the phone listening to our

European allies. [Laughter] The conversation went like this: “Hey, John, Kim Chong-il here.” [Laughter] “Just wanted to call and let you know, you’re my guy.” [Laughter]

Those weapons of mass destruction have got to be somewhere. [Laughter]

As you can tell from the look on Andy Card’s face, we’ve become a little concerned about the Vice President lately. [Laughter] Whenever you ask him a question, he replies, “Let’s see what my little friend says.” [Laughter]

But we get along well. Here I am saying, “Dick, if the Hunan Palace doesn’t get lunch here in 4 minutes, we’re going out.” [Laughter]

Nope, no weapons over there. [Laughter] Maybe under here. [Laughter]

Oops, this photo wasn’t supposed to be in here. This is the Skull and Bones secret signal. [Laughter]

I’m not paranoid. But it was at this point in my Presidency that I had a strange feeling somebody was following me. [Laughter]

One thing about being President is you get lots of advice. “Yes, Mother.” [Laughter]

“Yes, Mother.” [Laughter]

“Mother, would you just listen to us for once.” [Laughter]

I like this next picture a lot. It’s hard to get Rumsfeld to laugh, but when he does, boy, it is worth it. [Laughter]

This photo was taken down at the ranch, and as you can tell, Barney is not very happy with me. This is the day I told him he’d been neutered. [Laughter]

And this is the day that Barney got his revenge. [Laughter]

Now, on long flights, the staff and I often play cards. The key to playing poker is keeping a straight face and never letting your opponent know what you’re thinking. [Laughter] Actually, this is on the way to the G-8 summit. Once I got these trading cards, it’s easy to remember the names of the foreign leaders. [Laughter]

All Presidents have dreams and aspirations of what their legacy will be. Here they are measuring me for Mt. Rushmore. [Laughter]

But I do have a few serious photos to show you, in closing. It’s photos like these that mean the most to me.

Some of our Special Forces sent me this last picture. The faces are blurred in the slide because they remain in harm’s way. The photo hangs in my private study next to the Oval Office. To honor those who died on September the 11th and to make a statement of their own commitment to this country’s security, these Americans buried a piece of the World Trade Center in a place in Afghanistan where the Al Qaida once ran free. They wrote that they held a ceremony, which was far more emotional than they had expected. The team leader wrote a prayer and a dedication. Let me read you one sentence from that dedication: “We consecrate this spot as an everlasting memorial to the brave Americans who died on September the 11th, so that all who would seek to do her harm will know that America will not stand by and watch terror prevail.”

We will not stand by. The greatest honor of being President is leading such men and women. We have the freedom we enjoy tonight because they protect that freedom. And may God protect them.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Democratic Presidential candidate Howard Dean; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Notice—Notice of Intention To Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With the Dominican Republic

March 24, 2004

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002, I have notified the Congress of my intention to enter into a free trade agreement with the Government of the Dominican Republic.

In accordance with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of that Act, this notice shall be published in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 24, 2004.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:42 a.m., March 25, 2004]

NOTE: This notice was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 25, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 26.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting Notice of Intention To
Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement
With the Dominican Republic**

March 24, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–210; the “Trade Act”), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intent to enter into a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Government of the Dominican Republic.

This agreement will create new opportunities for America’s workers, farmers, businesses, and consumers by eliminating barriers to trade with the Dominican Republic, the largest economy in the Caribbean Basin. At the same time, it will help bring to the Dominican Republic expanded economic freedom and opportunity, and it will provide an opportunity for regional stability, democracy, and economic development through closer ties of commerce, investment, and friendship.

Consistent with the Trade Act, I am sending this notification at least 90 days in advance of entering into an agreement with the Dominican Republic. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress in developing appropriate legislation to approve and implement this free trade agreement.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 24, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 25. An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

**Remarks in a Discussion on Job
Training and the Economy in
Nashua, New Hampshire**

March 25, 2004

Lucille Jordan. Mr. President, on behalf of the faculty, the administration, the students, and the great citizens of the great State of New Hampshire, I’d like to welcome you to our campus. Mr. President, thank you.

The President. Lucille, thanks. Thank you all. Thanks for having me. We’re going to have an interesting dialog today about jobs, job creators, and education, and how they all work together to make sure that this State remains competitive and a good place to find work.

Before we do so, though, I do want to thank you, Lucille, for—and your board and your faculty and your students—for welcoming me here. It’s not easy to have the President come. [Laughter] Seems like there’s a large entourage. But I appreciate it. And it’s going to be—I think you’re going to enjoy this. I know I am.

Participant. I’m planning on it. [Laughter]

The President. Good. I had the privilege today of riding from the airport in Manchester with your great Governor, Craig Benson. Appreciate you coming, Governor. I got to see the New Hampshire Government in action, because also in the car was the speaker, Gene Chandler, and the senate leader, Tom Eaton. I appreciate you all being here.

I know the State attorney general is here. Peter, where are you? Thanks for coming. Good to see you, sir. Got a lot of members of the State house and State senate here. I know that Senator Jane O’Hearn, who happens to be the chair of the senate education committee—Lucille told me to be especially nice to her. [Laughter] Thank you for coming.

I first want to tell you how optimistic I am about the future of the country. You know why? Because we’ve overcome a lot, when you think about it. In the last 3 years, this country has really been challenged. Our spirit has been challenged. Our economy has been challenged, and we’ve overcome them. We’re a great country, full of wonderful people, dedicated, hard-working people.

When I say the economy has overcome a lot, let me explain what I mean. We've been through a recession. That means things are going backwards. Ask any of these businessowners what it's like to be in a recession. They'll tell you it's plenty tough. It's hard to plan. It's hard to be optimistic when you don't have any growth. It's hard to find work during a recession.

As well we got attacked on September the 11th, and that affected our spirit. It affected our economy. Cheryl McGinnis is with us today. It affected her life. Her husband Tom was the pilot of American Airline Flight 11.

The Government has got a solemn duty to protect America. And that's why we created the Department of Homeland Security. That's why we put out the PATRIOT Act, so our FBI and CIA can share intelligence to make sure we know who's here to hurt us. That's why the great United States military is on the offensive against—[*applause*]. The best way to protect us is to stay on the offensive and to find terrorists before they try to harm us again, and they will. That's what they're trying to do. Our solemn duty is to protect America.

There's a commission going on in Washington, DC. It's a very important commission. It's a commission determined to look at the 8 months of my administration and the 8 years of the previous administration to determine what we can learn, what we can do to make sure we uphold our solemn duty. Had I known that the enemy was going to use airplanes to strike America, to attack us, I would have used every resource, every asset, every power of this Government to protect the American people.

There's a lot of good folks working to keep us safe. We overcame September the 11th because this Nation refused to be intimidated. We weren't going to let killers and assassins determine our course of life. It's a great nation because the people of America are resolute and strong and determined people.

And then we found out we had some corporate leaders that didn't tell the truth. And it hurt us. It was another obstacle to overcome. You see, business numbers and accounting all depend upon honesty, and the fact that there were some in our society who

were irresponsible citizens and who didn't tell the truth, it cost a lot of people jobs. It hurt our confidence. It was yet another hurdle to overcome. We reacted strongly, I want you to know. We passed tough laws. Perhaps you've seen on your TV screens some of the people that forgot to be responsible citizens getting their day in court. The message is—should be loud and clear to people in the business world: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

Part of the war on terror is to—is broader than just Al Qaida. The war on terror encompasses other theaters as well. You see, the lesson of September the 11th is we must deal with threats before they fully materialize. You can't just see a threat and hope it goes away. That's the lesson of September the 11th. Remember, prior to September the 11th, we thought oceans could protect us. But the strategic calculations of America must shift in order to do our duty to keep this country safe.

I saw a threat; the Congress saw a threat; the United Nations Security Council saw a threat in the form of Saddam Hussein. He was not only a threat to people in the Middle East because of terrorist ties; he's a threat to America or anybody else who loved freedom. He's a threat to his own people. He had torture chambers and mass graves.

And so I went to the United Nations. I think you might remember that—[*laughter*—and said, "Deal with the guy. He's been out there for 11 years defying every time you have said, 'Disarm for the sake of peace, for the sake of freedom.' And he ignored it." And so I said, "We'll give him one more chance." And we did. The United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to say to Saddam, "Disarm, or face serious consequences." And he was defiant once again. And given the lessons of September the 11th, I had a choice: You either take the word of a madman, a guy who had gassed his own people at one point in time, or defend America. I'll defend our country every time. [*Applause*] Thank you all. Thanks.

During the runup to the liberation of Iraq, on our TV screens you see, "March to War." That's hard to the business world. It's hard for job creators. It's not a very—it's not—

you don't get a lot of confidence when you think your country is marching to war. War is negative. I did what I thought was right. Now we're marching to peace. But we overcame that part.

So we've been through recession, an attack, corporate scandals, and war. And yet our economy is growing and getting stronger. Part of it had to do, I think, with the policy of our administration, which is tax cuts. See, I believe that when you let somebody have more of their own money to spend or save, that person is likely to demand an additional good or a service. And when they demand a good or a service, the way our economy works, somebody will produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces the good or a service, somebody is a lot more likely to find work.

And so this tax stimulation came right at the right time. We cut the taxes on everybody. Sometimes in Washington, if you hear the tax debate, they say, "Well, this person deserves tax cuts and this one doesn't." It's kind of like picking and choosing winners and losers, which I don't think is good tax policy. My attitude is, if you pay taxes and you want tax relief, then everybody ought to get tax relief.

We increased the child credit to \$1,000 per child. That helps people raising their families. If you've got children, it helps a lot. Reduced the marriage penalty. It doesn't make much sense to penalize marriage in the Tax Code when you're trying to encourage marriage in society. I mean, marriage is a good thing, not a bad thing. Put the death tax on its way to extinction. If you're a small-business owner, you ought to be able to leave your assets to whomever you choose. You get taxed when you're growing your business, and you get taxed after you leave the Earth. And sometimes it's hard to pass on your assets to whoever you want. I mean, one of the ways to encourage entrepreneurship is to say, "Build your business and leave it—leave your assets to whomever, whether it's a business or a farm or a ranch." So we did some good things with the tax cut.

Let me tell you what else we did that relates to small business. Most of the new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. Seventy percent of small busi-

nesses—or new jobs are created by small businesses. And so most small businesses are Subchapter S corporations or sole proprietorships. Those are legal words for meaning they pay tax at the individual income tax rate. So when you cut the taxes on the individuals, you're really cutting taxes on small businesses around America. And if you're interested in job growth, it makes sense to allow small businesses to have more of their own capital so they can expand and grow and hire more people.

We also provided incentives in the Tax Code to allow small businesses to deduct up to \$100,000, as opposed to \$25,000. We had bonus depreciation plans available for investment. So we've made a difference, and the results are good. They really are good, when you think about it. And the unemployment rate here in this State is 4.1 percent. That's good, real good. The inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. That's positive for society. We want people owning things. We want people owning their own business. We want people owning their own home. By the way, minority homeownership rates are extraordinarily high in America, and that is really important too for our country. Manufacturing is increasing, and we've had job growth.

Now, there's more to do, and we're not going to be satisfied until people who want to work can find a job. And so what are the things we can do? Well, one, we need an energy plan. It's hard to run a business; it's hard to be a manufacturer if you're worried about the reliability of energy. Ask somebody what it's like to run a business that requires energy and your energy bills spike up, or what was it like if you're worried about getting electricity at all, because the grid is antiquated. It wasn't all that long ago, like last summer, that much of the East Coast was affected because the grid is old.

We need an energy bill that encourages conservation, alternative sources of energy, a bill that modernizes the electricity system, and a bill that makes us less dependent on foreign sources of energy. In order to make sure jobs stay here at home, in order to make sure people can find work, we need to be competitive. That's what we need to be thinking about—how to make sure we can

do a better job of encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit to be strong so people create jobs in America. One way is good energy policy.

We need tort reform. If you're a businessowner—[*applause*]. You talk to any businessowner, and in most places, they're worried about junk lawsuits that run up the cost of doing business. When they spend more time fighting off a junk lawsuit, it means there's less time hiring somebody.

We need to worry about the cost of medicine. Listen, health care costs are going up. You ask any businessowner what it's like to run a small business, and they'll tell you, "One of my big fears is that I can't provide for my employees," they'll tell you, because the cost of health care is going up. There's a debate in Washington. There's a philosophical debate over who you want running the health care. There's some up there, good people, good, honest, decent Americans who say, "We want the Federal Government making all the health care decisions." I'm on the other side of that. I think we want consumers to be making—[*applause*].

There's some practical ways to do that. One, small businesses ought to be allowed to pool risk across jurisdictional lines so they can get the same purchasing power that big businesses have. Those are called association health care plans. Another interesting option for small businesses and employees is called health savings accounts; lets you put money in your health saving account tax-free, earn money tax-free, take money out tax-free. And you combine that with a major medical insurance policy, you've got yourself affordable health care, and it's good for small businesses. These are exciting options that are now developing in the marketplace, where the consumer has got more choice over the decisionmaking, as opposed to Government.

Finally, in order to make sure that the health care costs are reasonable, we need medical liability reform. I want to praise the Governor and the speaker and the senator for working on medical liability reform here in New Hampshire. We need national medical liability reform too.

There's three other things I want to talk about right quick. I promise you others are going to talk. You know how we are in Wash-

ington, once we get a mike—[*laughter*]—it's hard to pry it out of our hands.

Ms. Jordan. College presidents—

The President. Yes, college presidents. [*Laughter*]

The tax cuts are set to expire. The child credit goes down next year. The marriage penalty goes up, and the 10-percent bracket as part of the overall tax cuts changes to the bad. Now, Congress needs to make these permanent. They need to make sure that people have more money in their pocket. We're strong. We're getting stronger. There's more to do. It's hard to run a business if you're uncertain about what the Tax Code is going to look like, and we definitely want our consumers to have more money in their pockets as we're coming out of what has been a very difficult period of time. You've heard the challenges we've overcome. If they don't make these tax cuts permanent, it means they're raising taxes on people with families. It means they're raising taxes on people who are married. It means they're raising taxes on people who are in the 10-percent bracket. The tax cuts need to be permanent.

There is a temptation in Washington to say the solution to jobs uncertainty is to isolate America from the world. It's called economic isolationism, a sense that says, "Well, we're too pessimistic. We don't want to compete. As opposed to opening up markets, let's close markets, starting with our own." That is very dangerous for the New Hampshire economy. One in five jobs in New Hampshire depends upon exports. In other words, it depends upon the ability to get our goods into somebody else's market.

Presidents before me, both Republican and Democrat, had made the decision to make our markets relatively open compared to other countries, because it's good for U.S. consumers. You see, when consumers have got more choices and there's more competition, it gives you—it helps satisfy your demand at reasonable price.

And so the fundamental question is, do we keep our market open, or do we close it. My attitude is, we keep it open but make sure others open theirs too, see, and make sure the playing field is level. I've got great confidence in New Hampshire's workers. I've

got great confidence in New Hampshire's entrepreneurs. I've got great confidence in products that say "Made in the USA." And so do a lot of people who live in other lands. So let's sell. Let's have a—I'm going to continue what I've been doing and say, "You reduce your barriers, see? Ours are down; just treat us the same." One way to make sure jobs don't go overseas, and one sure way to make sure we're vibrant here at home is to insist that other people lower their barriers so we can compete. That's all we ask. Just give us a chance. America's—Americans can rise to the challenge. Trust me.

Okay, here we go. Two other things—I want to mention one other fellow before I get off here. Remind me, Larry, to mention you. *[Laughter]* I want to talk about education and the role of education to make sure jobs are here at home and that people can find work.

First, we've got to get it right at the elementary school level. We've got to make sure that every child learns to read and write and add and subtract. I'm a big believer in accountability, not because I want to punish—I don't see—if the goal is to teach every child to read at grade level by the third grade and keep him at grade level, I don't see how you can figure that out unless you measure.

Now, the people of New Hampshire ought to be running your own business. You don't want the Federal Government telling you how to run your schools. You want to be able to design your own accountability systems. But I would hope you would want government at all levels saying, "What are the results?"

And so we're spending record amounts of money at the Federal level, for particularly Title I students, which are poor students. And Senator Gregg, by the way, has been working hard for education matters. A good guy, I'm sure he would be here, but he's voting. *[Laughter]* But so we're asking the question, and we're going to get good results. See, accountability allows you to test your curriculum. Accountability lets you determine who needs help today, before it's too late. And one thing I'm not going to tolerate as your President—and you shouldn't tolerate as citizens—is just shuffling kids through the

system and hope they learn. Those days have got to end.

We've got remedial programs to help high school and junior high kids. Let's face it. Because there hasn't been accountability and hasn't been rigorous examinations of curriculum, some teachers need to be retrained, we're shuffling some kids through. And all of the sudden, they show up in high school, and they can't read. And so we need to have a focus on remedial education. I've asked Congress to put up some money to do just that, to help States and districts do that.

But I think one of the great and hopeful opportunities for the country is to utilize our community college systems to make sure that people are trained for the jobs which actually exist. Community colleges have got the capacity to be flexible in their curriculum. They don't stay stuck in a certain kind of course load. Community colleges are able to say to businesses, local businesses, "What do you need?" Local businesses say to community colleges, "This is what we need." Mayors and Chamber of Commerces are able to say to community colleges, "In order for us to track a certain type of business or jobs, here's what we need."

And so long as the community college has got able leadership, like educational entrepreneurs like Lucille, and are willing to be flexible, you can actually match people with the skills needed to work in the new jobs of the 21st century. Listen, our economy is changing. We're a productive workforce, and some people need to be retrained in order to be productive workers. And the community college is a great place to do so.

And that is what we're going to start talking about. But I mentioned Larry, Larry Jeffery. You probably don't know Larry. I didn't know him until I landed, and he was standing at the foot of Air Force One, the steps of Air Force One. He's here because he is a volunteer. He's a mentor. He teaches—he helps people learn what it's like to start your own business. We're going to talk to some people who have started their own business here today. It's heartening to know that a World War II vet, experienced businessperson, is willing to take time out of his life to mentor.

The reason I bring up—raise your hand, Larry, will you? There you go. That's him. The reason why I bring up Larry is because the strength of this country is the heart and souls of our citizens. You know, people say, "Well, America is strong because of our military"—and it's one reason, and by the way, we'll keep the military strong—or "We're strong because we're a prosperous nation, we're the largest economy in the world, and we've got a great spirit here." But we're really strong because we've got people who want to love their neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves.

I know it happens all over Nashua and the State of New Hampshire, where people get involved with church and synagogue and mosque in order to help a neighbor in need, or whether you go to your local civic group or whether you're a mentor. Listen, my call to you is, be like Larry. Take time out of your life and help change America, one heart and one soul at a time, and the country will be better off for it.

All right, here we go. Lucille says she's tired of me talking. *[Laughter]* Lucille is the president of the community college in which we sit. I have chosen this community college because she is doing exactly what I think a community college ought to do, which is to be practical in its application of education in order for people to be able to find a job. Explain to people how you're doing it.

Ms. Jordan. I will. But before I do that, with all due respect, I need to tell you that I have the best job in the United States as president of this college.

[Ms. Jordan made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, let me ask you about this one program, the national emergency grants. What happens is, is that sometimes, under certain circumstances, when a business gets shut down, there is worker-training money available at the Federal level to go to community colleges to help retrain workers for jobs which exist. And I believe we—the Federal Government granted a national emergency grant to this college.

Ms. Jordan. Yes.

The President. And how's that going?

Ms. Jordan. Very well, very well.

The President. A plant shut down in Manchester.

Ms. Jordan. Yes, and actually I think our sister campus in Manchester is——

The President. Is handling most of it.

Ms. Jordan. ——really helping them out a great deal, not only in the English second language area but as well as helping them out gaining new skills in manufacturing and computer skills in programming. And it's a real success, very much so, credit to the president Tom Wisbey.

The President. The point I'm making is, is that you can be proactive and reactive, proactive to find a curriculum that works to attract jobs or if jobs expand, reactive to economic downturn for a particular company, and help people. And that's what the community colleges are good at. They're good at taking people and converting their skill base to a useful skill base.

I'll tell you a very interesting story. I went out to Mesa Community College in Arizona, and I met a lady who had been a graphic design artist, I think for 15 years. And she went back to the community college and went to a technically based program. I think it was a 6-month program, if I'm not mistaken. She got out and joined Cable One, and in her entry-level job, she made more, after having gone to 6 months of community college, than she had in her 15th year as a graphic design artist. In other words, the transference of skills, the ability to make a person more productive, raises pay.

And the community college system—if people are interested in the community college system, think about going back to school for a period of time to raise your pay, to raise your standard of living, to give yourself a better shot at making a living by being employed by companies who are vibrant, competitive, and 21st century companies.

Ms. Jordan. Absolutely.

The President. Is that what you find?

Ms. Jordan. I think another area too that we don't think about often in industry is the allied health industry. And one of the things that we've done in a partnership here in Nashua is Southern New Hampshire Medical Center. We did not have the money to open up a lab. They came to us and said, "Look, we have a nursing shortage. We want to open

it up to the public. We're going to open up a million-dollar lab on their west campus," and they did that. And as a result, we have new nurses in the field.

The President. You know, it's an interesting point. Again, if anybody's listening—[*laughter*—and you're trying to work, think about the health care field. In a lot of our States around the country, there is a shortage of health care workers. Now, it's going to require a desire to go back and get the skills necessary to go into the health care field. Government can't make you make the decision to be a—to work and to gain new skills, but we darn sure can open the door. And that's what we're here to talk about.

Let me talk about Mike for a second, if you don't mind. Mike Hills is a student. He is a—I can't wait for you to hear his story. If you'd look at Mike walking down the street, you'd say, "You don't look like a student to me." [*Laughter*]

Mike Hills. I hear it at the campus sometimes too.

The President. There you go. [*Laughter*] Tell us your story, Michael. Tell us what you're doing, why you're a student here. Give us a little sense of the background. Bring people up to date. There may be somebody listening who is wondering whether or not it is worthwhile to go back to a place like Nashua, New Hampshire Community Tech. How you're paying? Are you paying it out of your pocket? How you getting here?

Mr. Hills. Well, first, before I begin, Mr. President, I'd like to thank you for coming and having me here with you. I'd like to take a moment to introduce to you my brother Patrick and my—[*Laughter*]

The President. Patrick, how are you? Keep your remarks short, Patrick, will you? We've got—[*Laughter*]

Mr. Hills. —and my girlfriend, Nancy, who is sitting right next to me.

The President. I would suggest reversing the order next time, Michael. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hills. Well, you know, they say blood is thicker than water.

The President. Yeah, right. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hills. Well, as you know, I'm a 41-year-old student here at the college, and I started here in September 2003. Before I started here, I was in the retail business. I

sold everything from soup to nuts. You name it, I probably sold it. And I have two daughters at home, and as you know, raising two daughters becomes more expensive as they get older. [*Laughter*]

The President. Hair gets a little whiter too, doesn't it?

Mr. Hills. As you can see, yes.

[*Mr. Hills made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good. Can I ask you one more question? You remind me of old Larry over there, you know? [*Laughter*] That's good.

Mr. Hills. Thank you, sir.

The President. As I understand, you got a little help to come here?

Mr. Hills. Yes, I did, through financial aid, through Pell Grants, through Stafford loans. I also was awarded the Triple A scholarship, the American Motors Association, and also two upon graduating that will also enable me to be ASE-certified, which is the Automotive Service of Excellence, which is an accredited program. It's not mandatory, but it also makes you more marketable in your area. And I encourage anybody who is thinking about going back to school—let me tell you, dollars and cents make some sense.

The President. There's money available. There's Pell Grants available. There's Trade Adjustment assistance available. There's national emergency grants available. You got to want it, now. You just can't say, "Okay, I think I'm going to gain skills just by thinking about it." People are going to have to seize the initiative. It's up to the individual, like Mike, but it's available. And that's why I'm so glad Mike is here to explain that even at 41 or, perhaps, especially at 41, there's great opportunities if you're willing to seize the moment.

Heather is with us, Heather Limanek. So Heather's working along. She's got one child. By the way, if the child credit is not made permanent, Heather pays more taxes next year. Just think about that now. [*Laughter*] So when—the Congress—I'm not worried about your Senators or your Congressmen, but there are some others you need to be thinking about. The people up there in Washington who say, "Oh, we're going to repeal the tax. We're going to tax the rich,"

that means they're going tax small-business owners. And if they don't make the child credit permanent, they're going to be taxing Heather right at the wrong time. So it's important for people to put a face with the consequences of bad tax policy.

Anyway, she's here—guess what happens? She's got a kid. She's working. She gets laid off in 2000, and then what happens?

[Heather Limanek, student, New Hampshire Community Technical College, and owner, Heather's Happenings, made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, let me tell you something. That's great, a fantastic story. What a great story. She has a dream, goes back to school, and starts her own business. It happens all the time in America. The job of Government is to create an environment in which people are confident about chasing their dreams. It's really the thing that makes our economy so unique and vibrant, isn't it.

Heather gets laid off, gets kicked in the gut, I think you said. [Laughter] Stomach, yes. [Laughter] Anyway, and now she's a businessowner. Government can't guarantee success. That's up to Heather. And it's why she's staying in school, to learn the skills necessary to be as good a small-business owner as she can. But we darn sure can make the environment such that somebody like Heather feels comfortable about taking risks.

We're really proud of you. I love the story. It's what I love about our country, isn't it? Somebody can own something that she can call her own and make it work. You noticed she said, "I hope to be hiring people next summer." That's how it works in America.

By the way, speaking about people hiring somebody, David Dunfee is with us today. He is the president of D.G. O'Brien, Inc. Tell us about D.G. Who is D.G.?

[David Dunfee made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, let me step in. He got him 175 employees, which is a good size company, but he's a Subchapter S corporation, which means he pays taxes at the individual income tax rate. So when you hear them in Washington talking about taxing the rich, that's the rich right there, see? That's who they're talking about. They're talking about taxing employers. If you're a small-

business owner and they're running up the top rates on you, you're taxing people who are creating jobs.

It makes no sense to be draining capital out of the economy, out of his coffers. He says he wants to expand this year. It means he's going to add more employees. If they're taking money away from this company, they're not going to be adding more employees. That's how the economy works. That is why I am so strong on making sure that the tax cuts are permanent.

Tell me—the other thing you noticed he said, because of the bonused appreciation—that's an accountant word for, we're trying to encourage you to buy equipment. That's what that means. What did you buy?

Mr. Dunfee. Last year, we spent about \$400,000 in capital equipment, anywhere from machine tools to computers to CAD stations. And this year, in part because of that tax credit, we're upping that 25 percent to \$500,000 and buying additional equipment to improve our productivity.

The President. You see, he makes a capital decision. In other words, he's going to go buy a machine. Somebody has got to build the machine. So when you said—when you heard me talk about increasing demand for a good or a service, it's precisely what I'm talking about. He increased demand last year for additional capital purchases by \$400,000. This year, he's going to make another \$500,000 of purchasing. Somebody has got to make those goods. And when somebody fills his order, it means a worker is more likely to retain a job or find a—or a worker is able to find a job. And that's how this economy works of ours. And that's what the decisionmaking process, not only by this company but by millions like him all across America, help define whether our economy is vibrant or not.

And I appreciate, Dave, your—taking on this business and being an employer. You notice the other thing he said, "The employees make it work." That's a great owner of a company and a great manager if he says—he gives the credit where credit belongs.

[Mr. Dunfee made further remarks.]

The President. Yes, I think you need to look at health savings accounts, seriously. An

employer, for example, can buy a catastrophic plan with a high deductible, say \$1,000 deductible. It's a fairly inexpensive plan relative to the current plans on the market that you're probably buying. And then the employer and the employee can match on some basis, depending upon the nature of the company, a tax-free entry into the health savings account, out of which the consumer pays incidental medicals until you get up to \$1,000. But if you don't spend all \$1,000, you earn interest, tax free, and you can roll it over from one year to the next. In other words, you have a health savings account, and it makes sense because it puts the consumer in charge of health decisions. It also encourages people to make healthy decisions with their bodies, like walk and exercise and don't drink too much and quit smoking. There's a lot of serious things you can do to keep their health savings account vibrant because it's your money.

Anyway, I wish you would look at that. I think you'll find it to be some pretty interesting.

[*Mr. Dunfee made further remarks.*]

The President. Fiscal policy can determine pressure on interest rates. We've got a plan to cut the deficit in half. Let me talk about the deficit right quick. We have a deficit, and we've got a deficit because we were in a recession, for starters. A recession means less revenue is coming into the Treasury, and if you don't cut expenses, you don't get a deficit. We didn't cut expenses. As a matter of fact, we increased expenses, particularly in two areas—the military. If I put somebody in harm's way, they're going to get the best, as far as I'm concerned. [*Applause*]

Thank you all. Sit down, please. Yes, I appreciate you applauding our troops. That's who you're applauding.

But we can get the deficit down half. It's going to have to be tough on spending. And it's hard—appropriators are appropriators, and they take their title seriously. And so we're working with Congress to set priorities and to bring the deficit down, which will help, but Alan Greenspan has a lot to do with it. I'll tell—I'll pass it on. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Dunfee. The only other thing I ask you to do is, let's bury that death tax.

The President. Yes, I agree. Let me talk about the death tax again. If you noticed, early in his discussion, he said he was struggling with being a second-generation owner. I'll tell you what he was struggling with. He was struggling with, probably, the debt you had to borrow in order to have the assets passed on from one generation to the next. That's what happens.

There's a lot of small-business owners who, when they faced with paying a death tax, have to sell the business in order to do so. And it just doesn't make sense. It's just not—it's a bad tax. It discourages entrepreneurship. It makes it harder for this good man to make sure his business is vibrant so that he keeps people working here.

So when you heard me talk about the death tax being good for the entrepreneur—getting rid of the death tax being good for the entrepreneurial spirit. That's what I meant. I meant it encourages people. It makes it easier for the businessowner to decide to pass their assets on to kids, families, whoever—charitable trusts, whatever it may be—without the Government standing in between the decider and the person who benefits from the transfer of the company. That's what he's talking about.

It's important for small-business owners to make sure the death tax does not come back. Catch this, though. The way the law is written, the death tax comes back to life in 2011. So here we are—let's advance to 2010, and we're all alive. [*Laughter*] And the death tax has been scaled down, and all of a sudden, it pops back up to existence. Imagine what policy is going to be like. You talk about confusing. And you know, a lot of people are going to be—well, never mind how they're going to be thinking. I'm just telling you, it's bad law.

George, you are a—you weren't born here in this country, were you?

George Kassas. If you'd like me to.

The President. No, no. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Kassas. I was born in Lebanon, sir.

The President. So you're a first-generation American.

Mr. Kassas. Yes, sir.

The President. Welcome.

Mr. Kassas. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

The President. You weren't even born here, and you're the cofounder of a successful company. Is that an accurate assessment?

Mr. Kassas. Yes, sir.

The President. Well, then, why don't you just tell us about it?

Mr. Kassas. Okay. Thank you so much, sir, for the opportunity to be with you on this stage. And it's a great privilege and a distinct honor for me.

I'd like to avoid the mistake Mike made so I'd like to introduce my family first to you. [Laughter] That's Kristen, Juliet, Tony, and George.

The President. That wouldn't be—that's not George W., is it? [Laughter]

[Mr. Kassas, cofounder and executive vice president for operations and business development, Cedar Point Communications, made further remarks.]

The President. Let me stop you. George has got two employees in the year 2000. You'll have 116—is that right?

Mr. Kassas. Yes, if you add the 25, absolutely.

The President. By the end of '04, you'll have 116 employees. That's really good news, isn't it? Think about that. I'm glad you're doing well, and there are any—tax credit does need to be permanent.

What I'm interested in people knowing is to connect, when you talk about the entrepreneurial spirit in small businesses, with job creation. This one company alone that was a dream in this guy's brain has now added employment of 117. It happens all over America. There's a lot of Georges in this world. [Laughter] There's a lot of entrepreneurs who dream big dreams and who work hard to achieve it. And the job of our society, in order to be competitive and to keep jobs here, is to make sure that entrepreneurial spirit is strong with good policy. And that's what we're talking about.

What else you got to say?

Mr. Kassas. Mr. President, this year and well into future years, we will be exporting our product to many customers around the world, starting this summer. And what does that mean? It means that every time we export, we grow the company; we add jobs; we

invest in our capital equipment. It's just as simple as that.

The President. Yes, well, I appreciate you understanding that. He is talking about—see, what he needs to be talking to me about is to make sure that the markets he wants to export into don't have a bunch of trade barriers and tariffs. See, what George wants from his Government is to say, "Don't shut it down here. Open it up over there." Just give him a chance to compete. We've got to reject economic isolationism in America. We've got to be bold and confident. We've got to believe in our people. We've got to believe the Georges of the world can compete anywhere if just given a chance to do so.

So when you hear me talking about trade policy, that's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about giving our entrepreneurs a chance to compete on a level playing field. And if you give Americans a chance to compete on a level playing field, we'll win just about every time.

Listen, I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you have found the conversations with your fellow citizens as stimulating, as interesting as I have. I mean, one of the things that's—I like to remind people, I'm an optimistic person. And the reason I'm an optimistic person is I listen to these kind of stories all the time, doers and dreamers and achievers, people who honor their family, people who love their country more than anything else. It is such an honor to be with you all. I'm so glad you're here.

Thank you for what you're doing. Thank you for being such great Americans. And may God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. at New Hampshire Community Technical College at Nashua/Claremont. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Craig Benson and State Attorney General Peter W. Heed of New Hampshire; Gene Chandler, speaker, New Hampshire State house of representatives; Thomas R. Eaton, president, New Hampshire State senate; and New Hampshire State Senator Jane O'Hearn. Discussion participant Lucille Jordan referred to Thomas Wisbey, president, New Hampshire Community Technical College Manchester. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on Senate Passage of the “Unborn Victims of Violence Act”

March 25, 2004

I applaud the Senate for passing the “Unborn Victims of Violence Act” today by a strong bipartisan vote. We must continue to build a culture of life in our country, a compassionate society in which every child is welcomed in life and protected by law.

Pregnant women who have been harmed by violence, and their families, know that there are two victims—the mother and the unborn child—and both victims should be protected by Federal law.

I look forward to signing this important legislation into law.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Budget Legislation

March 25, 2004

I commend the House for passing a responsible budget that advances our three highest priorities: defending America, winning the war on terror, and promoting growth and job creation, while cutting the deficit in half within 5 years. I am also pleased that this moves us closer to making the tax relief for America’s workers and families permanent.

I urge the House and Senate to reach agreement quickly and pass a budget based on my principles of funding what’s necessary to protect America and keep our economy growing, while restraining spending elsewhere.

Proclamation 7764—Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, 2004

March 25, 2004

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

The love of liberty that helped shape our Constitution has deep roots in the spirit of

ancient Greece. As we observe Greek Independence Day, we celebrate the timeless democratic principles that all freedom-loving people cherish.

To continue to strengthen and spread liberty around the world, the values and traditions of democracy must be passed on to each new generation. In 1821, our Nation supported the cause of Greek independence when the brave men and women of Greece began their long struggle for liberty. This struggle continued through the end of World War II. On the anniversary of the Greek Declaration of Independence, we honor the courage of these proud patriots and celebrate our nations’ shared commitment to democracy.

Today, Greece and America are strong allies and strategic partners in the great struggles for liberty and the global war on terror. We are working together to bring a fair and lasting settlement to Cyprus. We look forward to a future of continued friendship and collaboration between our two great nations as we advance peace and democracy in the world.

In celebrating Greek Independence Day, we are also grateful for the many ways Greek Americans have enriched our communities and strengthened our country.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 25, 2004, as Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:38 a.m., March 26, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 29.

**Remarks at a Bush-Cheney
Reception in Boston, Massachusetts**
March 25, 2004

Thank you all very much for coming. Thank you. Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be back in Boston. Thank you. *[Laughter]* I spent some quality time here in the seventies—*[laughter]*—mostly in the library at Harvard, of course. *[Laughter]* Well, I spent some quality time here.

I really appreciate the traditions here in Massachusetts. Last weekend I had the honor of participating in one of the city's finest traditions. It was the annual Saint Patrick's Day breakfast in South Boston. I called in. The good Senator took my call. Actually, he took Andy Card's call, a great Massachusetts citizen. And Andy handed me the phone. When I called in, I had the feeling they were going to ask me about a Massachusetts politician who had his eye on the White House, so I addressed the issue as directly as possible. I told Mitt the job was filled until 2008.

I'm proud of the job this good man is doing as Governor of this great State. Mitt Romney is a great Governor. And like me, he married very well. *[Laughter]* I'm proud Ann is here with us tonight. Ann, thank you for coming.

And I'm sorry Laura is not here. She is a fabulous First Lady. She is a great wife. She's visiting her mom in Midland, Texas. Like me, we put our faith in families first, above all. And she is—*[applause]*.

I appreciate my friend Ambassador Dick Egan, for helping make this an incredibly successful fundraiser. The country called, and he responded as the Ambassador to Ireland. He did a fine job on behalf of the citizens of this country. Dick, thank you for your service.

And my old buddy, the former Governor of Massachusetts, Bill Weld is here tonight. I appreciate you coming, Governor. I want to thank all the State officials who are here and local officials who are here. I see the high sheriff and others here today. I want to thank my friend Joe O'Donnell for renting a tie for tonight. *[Laughter]* I appreciate so very much Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman for my campaign, for

taking time out to make sure that we're able to get our message out all across our country.

I want to thank all the people who have worked so hard to really do a fantastic job, when you think about it. We've come to Boston, Massachusetts—some people would think that we wouldn't have much support here. But they're wrong. We've got a lot of support in this city.

I want to thank Darrell Crate, who is the chairman of the Massachusetts Republican Party, for being here. And I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. Nobody should take any State for granted in 2004.

The Vice President and I are counting on you. We want your help. We want you out there turning those voters out. Speaking about the Vice President, I made a really good pick when I asked Dick Cheney to be the Vice President of the United States. One time, giving a speech in front of Mother and Dad, I said, "Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had." Mother said, "Wait a minute." *[Laughter]* But he's doing a great job. *[Laughter]*

I've had the opportunity to observe the two United States Senators from this State. Your senior Senator, Ted Kennedy, is a very effective legislator. In Washington, he's known as the conservative Senator from Massachusetts. *[Laughter]* Your other Senator, my opponent, is an experienced Senator. He's built up quite a record. My opponent has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. *[Laughter]* He voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly feels very strongly about each of these issues. *[Laughter]*

In order to lead this country, you have to be consistent and clear. Someone asked Senator Kerry why he voted against the \$87-billion funding bill to help our troops in Iraq. Here's what he said: "I actually did vote for the 87 billion, before I voted against it"—*[laughter]*—end of quote. *[Laughter]* That sure clears things up, doesn't it? *[Laughter]*

His answers aren't always so clear, but the voters will have a clear choice in this campaign. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

I'm looking forward to this campaign. I'm looking forward to traveling this great country to talk about what I want to do for our country. I'm looking forward to reminding people that in 3 years, we've achieved great things. The most important thing is that we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision, a hopeful vision for the years ahead. We have a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom throughout the world, a positive vision for promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. I'm going to leave no doubt where we stand, and we're going to win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline, an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation in the world. We had to confront corporate crime that cost people their jobs and their savings. We passed strong corporate reform and made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice. We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to office, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our mili-

tary the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one can question the skill, the strength, or the spirit of the United States military.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up to make the hard decisions and to keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our Nation.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. The other side hasn't offered much in the ways of strategy to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of this country. I will take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. I will make it clear to the American people, I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

The big issue for every American family is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government could have.

I'm optimistic about the future of this country because I've seen Americans overcome economic challenge after economic challenge. I'm optimistic because of the good policies we've put in place but optimistic because of the hard work and productivity of the American people.

Economic growth in the second half of 2003 was the fastest in nearly 20 years. Manufacturing activity is increasing. Business investment is rising. Disposable income is rising. Inflation is low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. The minority homeownership rate is at the—nearly at the highest level ever. Job creation is gaining strength. We've added over 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has a different view of tax relief. When we passed an increase in the child credit to help families, he voted against

it. When we reduced the marriage penalty, he voted against it. When we created a lower 10-percent rate for working families, he voted against it. When we reduced the tax rate on dividends that many seniors depend upon, he voted against it. When we gave small businesses tax incentives to expand and hire, he voted against it. When we passed a phase-out of the death tax, he voted against it. We're beginning to see a pattern. [Laughter]

My opponent is one of the main opponents of tax relief in the United States Congress. When tax increases are proposed, it's a lot easier to get a "yes" vote out of him. Over the years, he's voted over 350 times for higher taxes on the American people, including the biggest tax increase in American history. He supported a 50 cent a gallon tax increase on gasoline. He wanted you to pay the extra money at the pump, and he wouldn't even throw in a free car wash. [Laughter]

Now my opponent is proposing a lot of new Federal spending—a lot of Federal spending. But somehow he's going to have to pay for it. There's a gap between Senator Kerry's spending promises and Senator Kerry's promise to lower the deficit. It's called a tax gap. Given Senator Kerry's record for supporting tax increases, it's pretty clear how he's going to fill the tax gap. He's going to tax all of you. But fortunately, he will not have that chance.

Higher taxes would undermine growth and destroy jobs just as this economy is getting stronger. To help grow the American economy and to create more jobs for American workers, I have a better idea. We should make all the tax cuts permanent.

And there's more to do. We must maintain spending discipline in the Nation's Capital. I've offered a plan to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation. We need tort reform in America. I've laid out a strategy to help control the cost of health care so people have better access to good health care through association health care plans and tax-free health savings accounts. We must have medical liability reform to protect our docs and to stop running up the cost of medicine on people.

In order to make sure we grow our economy, we need to reject economic isolationism and open up other countries' markets for U.S. goods and U.S. services.

I proposed—in order to make sure job growth is strong, we need to have an energy policy in America. We need to modernize the electricity system, and this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Oh yes, there's a lot of talk about job creation. But my opponent is against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism will not get anyone hired. The best way to make sure people can find work is to reelect a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur President.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the world of the United States of America. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance; the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance. Now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence information, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence information, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and previous Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Nation. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons program. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused

to comply. So I had a choice to make, either to take the word of a madman or defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. *[Laughter]* We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, a source of money to suiciders in the Middle East has been ended. Because we acted, nations like Libya got the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising in the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. And there's a reason. They know that a free Iraq will be major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. They don't understand our country. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq build a free society, which will make the whole world more secure. And we're standing with the Iraqi people, the brave Iraqi people, as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries do not object. I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource America's national security decision to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said, and I quote, "The war on terror is less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation." I disagree—strongly disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

Our men and women in the military are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for a fair treatment of faith-based groups, charitable groups of all faiths, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of

any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, to be exploited, or to be cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and judges who try to remake the values of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of our country from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. These aren't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget the day. A guy looked at me and said, "Don't let me down." A lot of the workers were shouting, "Whatever it takes. Whatever it takes, Mr. President." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character. They had doubts about our capacity to meet a serious challenge or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. Americans

have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win. And the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:10 p.m. at the Park Plaza Hotel and Towers. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts and his wife, Ann; former Gov. William F. Weld of Massachusetts; Joseph J. O'Donnell, fundraiser, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks in Albuquerque, New Mexico

March 26, 2004

Thank you very much. Thank you all. You all be seated, please. Thanks for coming. [Laughter]

I am glad to be in New Mexico. The sun is bright, and the people are friendly. Thanks for having me. We're here to talk about homeownership. We're here to talk about helping people realize their dreams. We're here to talk about making sure the business environment, particularly for small businesses, is strong and open so that people can realize their dream of owning their own business. We're here to talk about the great courage of America.

Before I begin, I do want to thank my friend Alphonso Jackson. He's the Acting Secretary. That means that the Senate hasn't approved him yet. [Laughter] So I made sure he sat next to Senator Domenici on the airplane. [Laughter]

But I've known Alphonso for a long time. He was the head of the Dallas Housing Authority. He did a great job of making sure

the Housing Authority worked well. Now he's in Washington with me to make sure that the HUD works well. We want money being spent to help people buy homes. That's what we want. We want more people owning their own home in America. And Alphonso, I want to thank you.

I want to thank John Kaltenbach, who helped arrange this event. I want to thank the members of the Home Builders Association of Central New Mexico. I want to thank all the entrepreneurs who are here. I want to thank the builders who are here.

I want to thank Senator Pete Domenici. He flew down with me. This guy is a fabulous United States Senator. He's really a good one. That's why, when I try to get things done, I make sure Pete Domenici knows what we're trying to do. He's accomplished. He also loves New Mexico a lot. He loves the people here.

And so does Heather Wilson—Heather Wilson, a great Congresswoman. She's really effective, got a decent soul. She's an accomplished, decent person, and I love working with her. They let old Steve Pearce in from eastern New Mexico. *[Laughter]* You might remember I was raised in Midland, Texas. As a matter of fact, that's where Laura is today. She's in Midland, right across the border from eastern New Mexico. She's visiting with her mother. But I've spent a lot of time in eastern New Mexico, so I know people like Steve Pearce, down-to-earth, honest, patriotic, willing to serve his country as the United States Congressman from that part of the world. Steve, thank you for coming with us today.

I want to thank Mayor Bill Standley from the city of Farmington for coming down to say hello. Thank you, mayor, for being here—thank the other local officials who are here. It's good to be in front of a crowd where people are wearing “gimme” hats or cowboy hats. *[Laughter]* That doesn't happen all the time in Washington. Let me just say, it doesn't happen nearly enough in Washington. *[Laughter]*

Today when I landed, I met a fellow named Irving Hall. Where are you, Irving? Right there. Stand up. Now you can sit down. *[Laughter]* Irving Hall works for our Government at the laboratories, the high tech—

Sandia—I think you worked there, didn't you, Irving? Yes. He worked there, and came time to retire, and his boss said, “What are you going to do, Irving?” He said, “Why don't you make a difference?” I believe that's what your boss told—what you told me your boss said. See, he met me at the airplane. I'd never met Irving before. But the reason he did is because this fellow, upon retirement, decided he was going to do something to help somebody, that he was going to dedicate his years of retirement for making somebody's life better by building homes for Habitat For Humanity.

I love the spirit of voluntarism in America, the fact that people like Irving are willing to take time out of their life to make a difference in somebody else's life. A lot of times we talk about the strength of America being our military—it's part of our strength, and we intend to keep the military strong—or the size of our wallet, relative to other countries, and that's important. But the true strength of America is the heart and souls of the American people. That's the strength of our country, the fact that there are people willing to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself.

And so, Irving, I want to thank you for setting such a good example for your community and your State and your Nation. I urge others to take time out of your life to make a difference in a child who may be lonely, in helping somebody learn to read, by providing shelter for the homeless or food for the hungry, and in so doing, you will make America a hopeful place for all our citizens. Thank you, Irving.

I am very optimistic about the future of this country for a lot of reasons. One, I know the character of the American people. When you know the character of the American people, you can't help but be optimistic because we're a can-do group of folks. We refuse to let anything get in our way. And we're able to overcome challenges, and we have overcome a lot of challenges during the past 3 years.

Let me remind you of what we have overcome as a nation. We have overcome a recession. That means things are going backwards. A recession is a time when things are going backwards, where people are having trouble

finding work, where there's not much hope in certain quarters of our country. We overcame that. And as we came out of a recession—and by the way, the stock market had begun to decline in March of 2000. The recession began in early '01. And when the stock market declined, that too affects people's attitudes. When you think about it, there's a lot of retired folks who look at their portfolios and see it going down. That's kind of a discouraging moment when that happens. You begin to wonder whether all the savings you put aside are going to be there when you really need them most.

And as we started to come out of the recession, we got attacked by an enemy on September the 11th, 2001, and it affected us. We lost nearly 1 million jobs in the 3 months after September the 11th attack. It also affected the way we have to think in America. We used to think that oceans can protect us. We now realized that America can be a battleground, and therefore, we have to do everything in our power to protect America. We're doing everything at home we can. But I'm going to tell you, the best way to protect America is to stay on the offense and get the terrorists before they get us. September the 11th affected us. It was one of the challenges that I talked about.

We also had some corporate scandals that affected the confidence of America. You know, it's important in a system like ours that people have confidence in balance sheets and numbers. If you're an investor or an employee or a shareholder, you've got to have—trust people. And yet there are some people who betrayed the trust.

We had some corporate citizens who were not responsible. They didn't do their duty as responsible citizens. We passed tough laws. The three Members here worked with us. We sent a clear message: We're not going to tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America. You cannot lie and cheat shareholders and employees without consequences in this country, but we overcame that. We're overcoming it.

And then I made a choice to defend the security of the country, which also affected our economy and affected the confidence of the people. September the 11th taught a lesson. It's an important lesson for America. We

must deal with threats before they fully materialize. That's the lesson of September the 11th. You can't see what you think is a threat and hope it goes away. You used to could when the oceans protected us, but the lesson of September the 11th is, is when the President sees a threat, we must deal with it before it comes to fruition through death on our own soils, for example.

I looked at the intelligence and saw a threat in Iraq. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. In fall of 2002, I went back to the United Nations. I said, "Look, why don't we deal with this threat together? We all see a threat, so why don't we get Saddam Hussein to do what the world has been demanding to do for over a decade, which is to reveal the weapons programs and get rid of him, for the sake of the security of the world. Your choice, Mr. Saddam." He said, "No, I'm not interested."

You see, given that choice whether to trust the word of a madman, a man who had used chemical weapons on his own people, or to defend our country, I will choose to defend America every time. *[Applause]* Thank you all.

The challenge we overcame was the fact that on your TV screens you saw the words "Marching to War." I don't know if you remember that or not. As we were trying to get Saddam to disarm peacefully through the United Nations and the collective will of the world, you see "March to War." That's hard if you're a business person. It's hard to risk capital or expand your business when the country is marching to war. It's not a good thought. Or if you're a consumer, maybe thinking about buying a house, if you look on your TV screens that say "March to War," you're not so sure you want to buy the house then, because you're not sure what the consequences of marching to war will be.

Now we're marching to peace. We're marching to peace, and the world is better off. We've overcome that obstacle. And the reason I say we've overcome these four things is I want to remind you of the facts.

First, our economy is growing. It's strong, and it's getting stronger. Secondly, inflation

is low, and interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. New Mexico's unemployment rate is 5.7 percent, down from 6 percent a year ago. Things are improving. Things are getting better. Thanks to being the most productive workforce in America—and I might say thanks to good policies—this economy is strong, and it's getting stronger.

I look forward to continuing to make the argument that the reason why things are improving, besides the fact that the character of this country is strong, is that we let people keep more of their own money. That's what tax relief is.

When you got more of your own money in your pocket, pretty good chance you're going to demand an additional good or a service. And when you demand an additional good or a service, somebody is going to provide it for you. And when somebody provides an additional good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or to find a job. That's the way the economy works.

And so the tax relief we passed came at the right time. The recession was a shallow recession, thanks to the tax relief. The tax relief helped families because we raised the child credit to \$1,000 per child. The tax relief helped marriages because we reduced the marriage penalty. What kind of Tax Code is it that penalizes marriage, by the way? We helped our seniors by reducing the taxes on dividends.

We also helped the small-business community a lot in our tax relief plan. I'll tell you why. Most small businesses are sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, which means they pay tax at the individual income tax rate. So when you hear me talking about reducing all taxes, I want you to think about the benefit that does for the small-business community. Seventy percent of new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. And therefore, if you're worried about job creation, it makes sense to stimulate the small-business sector of this country, and the tax relief did exactly that.

One of the great successes of this period of time, a period of time that had a lot of challenges, is the fact that housing starts and

homeownership are incredibly strong right now. Low interest rates help. It makes it easier, obviously, to afford a mortgage, but so did the tax policies. See, when people feel more confident they're going to have money in their pocket, they're more likely to go out and buy a home.

The home sales were the highest ever recently. That's exciting news for the country, when you think about it—good for the builders—[laughter]—but more importantly, it's good for the owners. We want people owning something in America. That's what we want. The great dream about America is, "I can own my own home," people say, or "I can own my own business," like many back here do, or "I can own and manage my own health care account or my own retirement account."

See, we want more people owning something because when somebody owns something, they have a vital stake in the future of the country. The more people who own their home, the better off America is, and we're making good progress. Our Nation's 68-percent homeownership rate is the highest ever. More people own homes now than ever before in the country's history, and that's exciting for the future of America.

There's a homeownership gap in America that exists for minorities. And we got to do something about it. So Alphonso mentioned the goal—I set a good goal, which is adding 5.5 million new minority homeowners in America by the end of the decade. When we're talking about homeownership, we're talking about for everybody. That's what I'm talking about. The more people who own their home, the better off America will be.

Since then, since I laid out the goal, more than 1.5 million minority families have become homeowners. And for the first time ever, more than half of minority households own their own home. We're making progress closing the gap. But more importantly, people are understanding what it means to be a buyer and an owner. People understand what it means to say, "This is my house."

Lori Benavidez is with us. Lori, thank you for coming. She's a mom of two. She brought her own mother with her—that would your grandmother. [Laughter] Lori is—when I met her backstage—the kind of person that you want really owning a home because she's

so thrilled with the idea. We helped her. I say we—people here in this part of the world did. We got a program that helps people who rent through Voucher 8 programs to afford a downpayment. It helps them take some of those payments and set it aside for a downpayment so that she can afford to buy her own home. What she did is she got counseling services. I know there's some—we'll talk a little bit about that in a second.

Let me tell you what she said, though, about owning her first home. She said, "I never thought the day would happen when my girls and I would be sitting in our own home. It's a miracle," she said. Yes, Lori said, "You made it possible." I think she told me that. I said, "No, Lori, you made it possible. You're the reason why the miracle happened," because she decided she wanted to follow her dream. And the role of Government is to help people realize their dream, not stand in the way of dreams but to make it easier for people to realize their dream.

And there are practical ways to do that. One practical way is to help people with a downpayment. There are low-income citizens in our country who simply cannot afford a downpayment. They may be able to afford the mortgage over time, but they—one of the hurdles for homeownership is, "I can't—I don't want to put the money up. I just don't have that kind of cash to make the downpayment," people will say.

I'm sure some homebuilders and real estate agents know what I'm talking about. They say, "I think this is what I want to live out my dream, but I can't put up the money." So the Government has a chance to help, in my judgment. I want to thank very much the Congress working on the—providing money to help people with their downpayment on their home, the practical way to encourage more people to own a home, to give them a chance. There will be \$900,000 coming in May to help families in this State afford a downpayment.

A practical way—another practical way to help people, first-time homebuyers is to make zero downpayment loans possible for those whose mortgages are insured by the Federal Housing Administration. In other words, you go to your FHA administration, get your loan insured, then you don't have

to pay a downpayment. Right now they have to pay a 3-percent downpayment. It doesn't sound like a lot to some. It's a lot to people who are struggling to make ends meet and who yet still want to realize their dream.

Those are two practical ways to help people cross the hurdle—the initial hurdle of buying a home. By the way, if we can get the FHA plan in place, it will help 150,000 families buy homes in the first year alone. It's a practical way, again, of encouraging homeownership.

I don't know if you saw Lori. She had a tear in her eye when I introduced her because of the thrill of owning her own home. We want Lori all over the country to feel the same way, to have that great sense of enthusiasm and joy about saying, "This is my home. Welcome to my home."

The second way we can help is to make sure that Americans understand what it means to buy a home. You know, I don't know if you've looked at those forms, but there's a lot of fine print. [Laughter] And if you're nervous about fine print, like a lot of good citizens are, then that may become a stumbling block to buy a home. "I'm not going to sign anything that's got all that fine print," people might say.

And there's a practical way to help people, and that is through counseling services. You've got good counseling services right here in New Mexico. Home New Mexico is such a counseling service. Tierra del Sol, in Las Cruces, is a counseling service.

Lori told me she got counseling services. I don't know if there's any counselors here, but there are people all across the country who get help through HUD, that sit down with people like Lori and explain what it means to buy a home, own a home, and the responsibilities with owning a home. They explain the credit policies. They explain what it means to make a monthly payment. They explain what the monthly payments will be. It's a way of compassionate people to help somebody who wants to realize their dream.

As well, under the Fair and Accurate Credit Transaction Act, people will have access to their credit report. And that's important. A lot of people have never seen their credit report before. Now you got access to it.

See, what happens is, people go start to try to buy a home and up pops the credit report, and they say, "Sorry, brother, your credit isn't any good. You can't buy a home." People need to be able to look at all the hurdles and impediments to buying a home as they go through the process. We don't want people to have their dreams crushed. We want people to realize dreams. And so I want to thank the counselors who are here for working with the Lori Benavidezes of the world, to explain to them what it means to be a homeowner.

As well we've got to make sure affordable housing is available to more and more citizens. In other words, we've got to provide incentive for homebuilders to build low-income houses, and so I've proposed a single-family affordable housing tax credit. It's a good plan. It's a plan that will make more homes available in parts of America that—where a lot of homes haven't been built or rehabilitated. It's a good way to encourage people to build homes in *barrios* or inner cities. It's a good way to make sure affordable housing is more available to citizens from all walks of life.

I also have called upon real estate and mortgage—the mortgage finance industry to join in our efforts in closing the minority homeownership gap to help low-income people buy a home. And more than two dozen major companies and organizations have stepped up. Suburban Mortgage outfit here in New Mexico as well as the Bank of Albuquerque have committed to extending more loans to low-income families and to financing the construction of more affordable homes. And I want to thank these corporate citizens for stepping up to the plate and helping the country become a better country by encouraging more people to own their own piece of property.

Homeownership is strong. We need to keep it that way. I want these builders back here employing people. I want people showing up for work. By the way, when it comes to work, we ought to have reasonable immigration policy. I bet you'd get a fair appraisal from some of the businessowners back here. They'll tell you that the immigration policy of this country isn't conducive for good econ-

omy; let me put it to you that way. I mean, you don't know if you're hiring somebody who's here legally or not legally.

See, we got a policy that has encouraged forged documents and smugglers. My attitude is if you—a builder back here can't find an American willing to do the job, they ought to have the ability to put somebody on the job who can do the job. My attitude is, is that we ought to have a temporary-worker's card for people who are willing to work. This is not an amnesty program. I don't think it makes sense to have amnesty right now in the country. Amnesty would encourage further illegal immigration. And amnesty would say to those who have stood in line for a long period of time who want to be a legal citizen, "Standing in line legally wasn't worth it. We're going to let somebody cut in line."

What I'm talking about is a worker plan, a plan that understands people coming up from Mexico want to put food on their table for their sons and daughters and that people right here behind me are looking for somebody to put roof—lay roof or lay tile, and they can't find workers here. In order to make sure the economy runs well, in order to make sure we treat people humanely, we need a temporary-worker plan. It makes sense to do that. I look forward to working with Congress to get something reasonable out.

A couple of other things I've got on my mind I'd like to share with you about how to make sure America remains a good place to do business. You hear a lot of talk about jobs going overseas. Some are going overseas, and some from overseas are coming here. But the best way to make sure people can find work in America is to make sure the business environment, the entrepreneurial environment is strong and solid, that it's a good place to do business; let me put it to you that way. If you want people hiring people in America, we've got to make sure America's a good place to do business, a good place for our employers, and there's some things we need to do.

We need tort reform in America—too many lawsuits. Ask these employers what it's like when you're threatened by a lawsuit or

you see your neighbor threatened by a lawsuit. There's too many lawsuits in the country; there just is. There's reasonable tort reform. Congress passed—the House passed some class-action reform and some asbestos reform and medical liability reform. It's stuck in the Senate. As people tell you, the trial lawyers are a strong lobby up there in Washington, DC. But I'm going to keep pushing for tort reform because it's right, and it's the way to make sure America stays a competitive place to do business.

Speaking about medical liability reform, another issue that plagues small-business owners and employers is the cost of health care. It's going up, and we need to address the cost of health care without letting the Federal Government run the program.

And there are some practical ways to do that. One, I told you about medical liability reform that's got stuck in the Senate. But one of the reasons health care costs are going up is because of the frivolous and junk lawsuits that are threatening our docs in hospitals. And so therefore, docs and hospitals practice what's called defensive medicine in order to protect themselves in a court of law.

Listen, there's reasonable reform. But what's not reasonable is a system today when you've got trial lawyers who view the legal system as a lottery where they can hit the jackpot, where they can get a big salary. All that's going to do is make your health care costs too high.

We need association health plans for small businesses so they can pool risk. If you're a small builder here in Albuquerque, it's hard to go into the marketplace and find affordable insurance for your hands. But if you're able to team up with other builders, not only in New Mexico but around the country, and pool risks just like big corporations do, you're going to be able to find more affordable health care for your employees.

We also need to expand health savings accounts. This is a great idea, by the way, for small businesses and employees to be able to put money in tax-free, keep it in your plan tax-free, and take it out tax-free. You cover incidentals, and then you can have major medical to make sure you cover your big expenses. And believe me, this is a way for

small businesses to be able to better afford health care.

You know what else we need to do? We need an energy plan. Pete Domenici is in the lead on having an energy plan in the United States Senate. It's stuck in the Senate right now, and Pete's going to get it unstuck. He's going to need some help. You might want to write some other people up in Washington, DC, who aren't with us here today. This bill needs to get moving. We need to be—we need to encourage conservation. We need to encourage alternative sources of energy. We need to modernize the electricity grid. But for the sake of keeping jobs here at home and for the sake of expanding the economy, we need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I'll tell you what else we need to do. Ask these builders what it's like to put up with Federal, State, and local regulations. I told Alphonso we've got to do something about it at the Federal level, and he says we are. So we'll watch him. *[Laughter]* He's got a—you don't need to fill out the same form to meet the same requirement at all three levels of government. Regulations cost small businesses a lot of money. It means you have less money in your pocket to expand your business and hire people; that's what that means. If you want to keep jobs here in America, we'll need to be—we need less paperwork.

And by the way, I don't know, Alphonso may not agree with this, but I bet a lot of the paperwork that's filed up in the Federal Government is never read. *[Laughter]* And if that's the case, it's another reason to make sure we don't have too much paperwork.

The other thing we need to do here in this country is to make the tax cuts we passed permanent. The way it works up there is they passed the tax cuts so people have more money in their pocket, and they're set to expire. The child credit is going to go down next year unless the Senate and the House make the tax cuts permanent. The marriage penalty's going to go up next year. The 10-percent bracket expansion is going to shrink. In other words, it's a tax increase. We're fixing to get taxed if the Congress doesn't act. These three Members are strong supporters

of making those aspects of the tax cuts permanent. It makes sense not to be taking money out of people's pockets just as this economy is beginning to recover. We want to keep demand strong. We want people being able to have their own money.

I like to tell people, the people of the country spent their own money better than the Federal Government could have, and that's why the economy is getting stronger. So they need to make the tax cuts permanent. If you're a businessperson, you need to be able to plan. You don't want to think your taxes are going to be here today and gone tomorrow. You need certainty in the Tax Code. Ask any businessperson what it's like to run a business, and the more certain the environment is in the future, the more likely it is they will be successful, and when they're successful, somebody will be able to find a job.

I also want to talk about trade. Presidents before me in both political parties made decisions to make sure America's markets were open for goods produced overseas. It made sense in many ways. It helped keep consumer prices down. It helps the consumer when there's competition.

My attitude is, if our markets are open, I want the other people's markets to be open. My attitude is, instead of walling each other off like the economic isolationists want us to do, let's be confident. Let's trust in our entrepreneurs. Let's understand our farmers and ranchers are the best at the world. Let's say, "If you trade with us in an open way, you got to open up your market." That's the Bush policy, "You open up your market so we can compete."

Economic isolationism will lead to economic stagnation. We can't have that. If we want people working, we've got to be confident in our ability to compete. A lot of people make a living here in America because their products they make are sold overseas. We're good at things in this country. When you see that label "Made in the USA," you know you got yourself a quality product. I want "Made in the USA" sold all over the world.

What I'm telling you is in order to be—make sure people can find work and retain a job, we got to make sure this economy

grows. These are what we call progrowth policies. We say we understand that the vibrancy of the country is in the small-business sector. We're vibrant when we make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong.

I want to talk about one other thing we've got to do to make sure this is a good place for people to realize their dreams and start a business and get well educated, is we've got to make sure this country is on the leading end of broadband technology. You see, new ideas and new businesses and new ways to educate people in Farmington, New Mexico, are going to occur when we're able to get information flowing across cables and telephone lines in a fast way. That's what broadband technology is. It means we'll open the highways of knowledge—new highways of knowledge.

This country needs a national goal for broadband technology, for the spread of broadband technology. We ought to have a universal, affordable access for broadband technology by the year 2007, and then we ought to make sure as soon as possible thereafter, consumers have got plenty of choices when it comes to purchasing the broadband carrier. See, the more choices there are, the more the price will go down. And the more the price goes down, the more users there will be. And the more users there will be, the more likely it is America will stay on the competitive edge of world trade.

The more users there are, the more likely it is people will be able to have interesting new ways to receive doctors' advices in the home. The more affordable broadband technology is, the more innovative we can be with education. It's important that we stay on the cutting edge of technological change, and one way to do so is to have a bold plan for broadband.

Let me say one thing about broadband. We don't need to tax access to broadband. The Congress must not tax access to broadband technology if we want to spread it around.

The role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and in which people are able to realize their dreams. And that's what we're here talking about, when you think about it. We're talking about making sure America is

the place where dreams can be realized and people can own something. People can own their own business. People can own their own home. People have a chance to say, "This is mine. This is my property." And we're making good progress here, doing just that.

Remember where I started? I talked about the hurdles we've overcome. We really have. The country is a strong country. It's overcome a lot, and there's more hurdles to overcome in the future. I'm confident of that. But you know what else I'm confident of? We'll overcome. This is such a great country, full of decent and honorable people.

Thank you for coming. May God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. at Expo New Mexico. In his remarks, he referred to John Kaltenbach, owner, John Kaltenbach Homes; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Orlando, FL.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia to the White House for a meeting on March 23.

March 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell.

Also in the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir of Sudan and Dr. John Garang de Mabior, Chairman

of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, to discuss the peace process in Sudan.

Also in the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with NATO Secretary General Jakob "Jaap" Gijshert de Hoop Scheffer to discuss counterterrorism efforts and the situation in Kosovo. He then had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy to thank him for his support against terrorism following the March 11 terrorist attacks in Madrid, Spain, and to discuss the situations in Iraq and Kosovo.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a meeting and photo opportunity with White House Fellows. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor recipients.

Later in the afternoon, in the East Room, the President participated in a photo opportunity with Children's Miracle Network Champions Across America Representatives.

March 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia. He then had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of Portugal to discuss counterterrorism efforts and the situation in Iraq.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany to discuss counterterrorism efforts.

Also in the afternoon, at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the President dropped by a meeting of chief State school officers.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Ministers Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha of Bulgaria, Juhan Parts of Estonia, Indulis Emsis of Latvia, Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas of Lithuania, Adrian Nastase of Romania, Mikulas Dzurinda of Slovakia, and Anton Rop of Slovenia, and NATO Secretary General Jakob "Jaap" Gijshert de Hoop Scheffer to the White House on March 29 for a meeting and ceremony marking the formal accession of these nations into NATO. The White House

also announced that the President will welcome Prime Ministers Fatos Nano of Albania, Ivo Sanader of Croatia, and Branko Crvenkovski of Macedonia, whose nations are seeking NATO membership and participating in NATO's Membership Action Plan.

March 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Konstandinos Karamanlis of Greece to the White House on May 20.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Paris, France, on June 5 to meet with French President Jacques Chirac, and that he will travel to Normandy, France, on June 6 to participate in ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of D-day.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher R. Hill to be Ambassador to South Korea.

The President announced his intention to appoint Steven J. Law as a member of the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People's Republic of China.

March 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Nashua, NH, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Lawrence Jeffery.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Boston, MA, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Kareen Wilkinson.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas Charles Krajeski to be Ambassador to Yemen.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michele J. Sison to be Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates.

The President announced his intention to appoint Marta Araoz de la Torre, Meredith J. Long, and James Lorand Matory as members of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee.

The President announced his intention to appoint Charles A. Horner and Armstrong

Williams as members of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

March 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Albuquerque, NM, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Irving Hall. He then met with Pueblo Governors.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Phoenix, AZ, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Barbara Lockwood.

Later in the afternoon, the President toured the Carpenter's Training Center in Phoenix. He then participated in a conversation on homeownership at the Center. Later, he traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on April 12.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel to Washington, DC, on April 14.

The White House Announced that the President will welcome King Abdullah II of Jordan to the White House on April 21.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted March 22

Jonathan W. Dudas, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, vice James Edward Rogan, resigned.

Jendayi Elizabeth Frazer, of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of South Africa.

Thomas Neil Hull III,
of New Hampshire, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Sierra Leone.

R. Niels Marquardt,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cameroon, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Roger A. Meece,
of Washington, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Lauren Moriarty,
of Hawaii, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as U.S. Senior Official to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.

Constance Berry Newman,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs), vice Walter H. Kansteiner, resigned.

Mitchell B. Reiss,
of Virginia, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Special Envoy for Northern Ireland.

Withdrawn March 22

Glen L. Bower,
of Illinois, to be a Judge of the U.S. Tax Court for a term of 15 years after he takes office, vice Carolyn Miller Parr, term expired, which was sent to the Senate on January 7, 2003.

Submitted March 23

Thomas Hill Moore,
of Florida, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2003 (reappointment).

James Francis Moriarty,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Nepal.

Withdrawn March 23

Thomas Hill Moore,
of Florida, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2002 (reappointment), which was sent to the Senate on March 11, 2004.

Submitted March 26

Thomas Charles Krajewski,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Yemen.

Michele J. Sison,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Arab Emirates.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released March 20

Transcript of an interview by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice with NBC News

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary: President Uribe of Colombia To Visit Washington

Released March 21

Fact sheet: Setting the Record Straight

Transcript of an interview by Deputy National Security Adviser Steve Hadley with Leslie Stahl, CBS, "60 Minutes"

Released March 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released March 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: South Lawn Ceremony To Mark the Enlargement of NATO

Released March 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Transcript of an interview by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice with network correspondents

Transcript of an interview by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice with roundtable of wire and print journalists

Transcript of an interview by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice with Tom Brokaw, NBC

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by Prime Minister Karamanlis of Greece to Washington

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Bush To Travel to Paris and Normandy

Fact sheet: Opening New Markets for America's Small Businesses

Released March 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released March 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Announcement of Election Results in Taiwan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Meeting With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt

Statement by the Press Secretary: Israeli Prime Minister Sharon To Visit Washington

Statement by the Press Secretary: King of Jordan To Visit Washington

Fact sheet: Dismantling the Barriers to Homeownership

**Acts Approved
by the President**

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.